

IN THESE TIMES

VOL. 8, NO. 10

FEB. 1-7, 1984

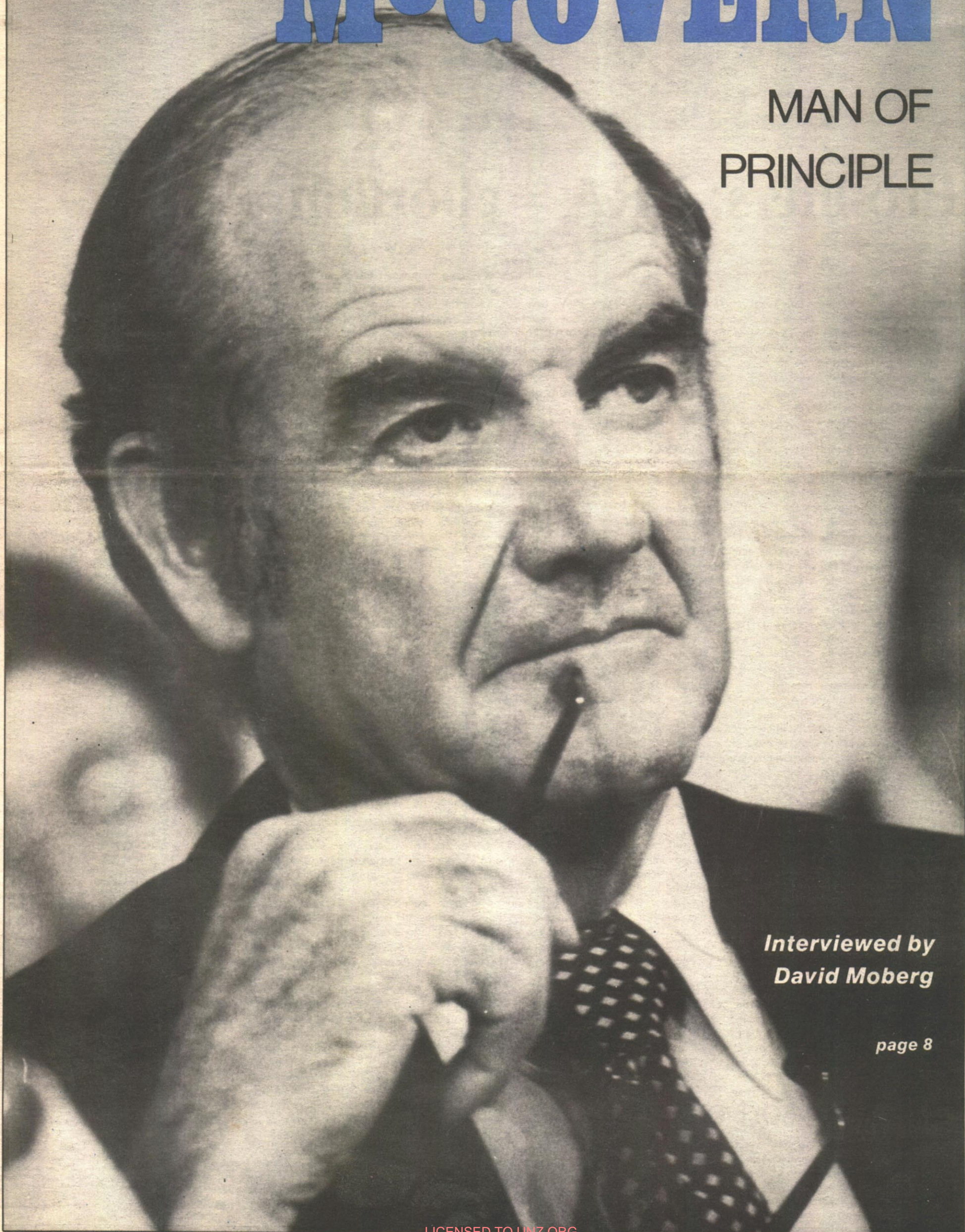
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Sniffing over France

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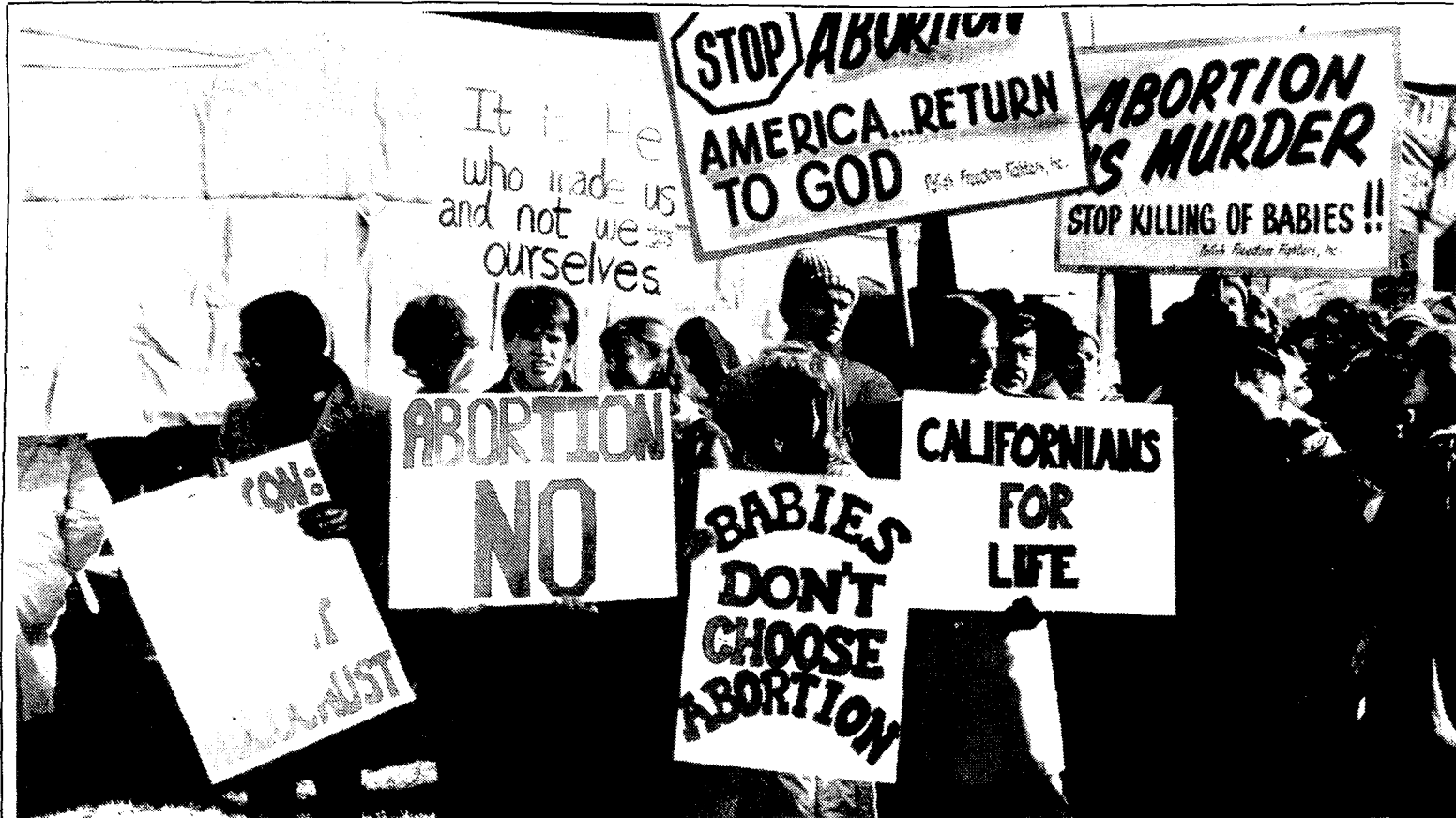
MCGOVERN

MAN OF
PRINCIPLE



*Interviewed by
David Moberg*

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About 35,000 abortion opponents demonstrated in front of the Supreme Court on January 23.

Pro-lifers: ERA = abortion

By Jo Freeman

WASHINGTON

The 11th annual March for Life attracted 35,000 abortion opponents to a rally in the Ellipse and a demonstration in front of the Supreme Court on January 23. One of the most hardline groups in the anti-abortion movement, proponents of its "no exceptions, no compromise, no abortions" position, were then sent off to lobby Congress, which had just returned from a two-month break.

In addition to urging adoption of the "Paramount Human Life Amendment" rather than the "odious state's rights" Amendment that failed Congress last year, marchers were told to focus their attention on defeating the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). They were also instructed to lobby against any kind of public funding for "any business" of a private organization "with a policy of advocating abortion," and against appropriations for the District of Columbia that do not prohibit their use for funding abortions.

Prior to the rally about 30 march leaders met with President Ronald Reagan to urge that he give their program—which he already supports—higher priority in his administration. They also asked him to screen all nominees for executive and judicial positions for "solid pro-life credentials." The march leaders praised his response at the beginning of the rally just before Reagan stepped out on the White House balcony to wave to the crowd assembled several hundred yards away. The crowd's response demonstrated clearly that it views him as the leader. A woman who passed out leaflets for the "National Pro-Life Democrats, Inc." was largely ignored.

Nellie Gray completely ran the show. She is the permanent president of March for Life, a registered lobbying organization with a board of directors that is two-thirds male and four "faithful volunteers" who are all female. She greeted the president, spoke and emceed at the rally, led the march and spoke again at the Supreme Court. At each opportunity she urged her followers to unite behind "no-compromise-type of legislation." Both she and the official literature emphasized that any deviation from their "Life Principles" made one a baby-killer.

No support for Jackson.

One page of the official journal was devoted to Jesse Jackson's apostasy. Once held in high regard by the pro-life movement, Democratic presidential nomination-seeker Jackson was scheduled to give the opening prayer at the 1978 March for Life, but withdrew at the last minute due to illness. The Journal said he would have been enthusiastically supported this election year by the pro-life movement as the "great hope among the Democratic presidential candidates" had he not renounced his previous stand. Jackson now says he is personally opposed to abortion, but considers it a private matter.

Gray also told the crowd that "the ERA is of extreme importance to us. It was supposed to have been stopped, but it's rearing its ugly head again. The abortionists now agree that ERA means abortion. The states rejected the ERA in this form, but an arrogant and unyielding Congress wants to send it back.

"Tell this to the Congress," Gray exhorted. "The mentality of the ERA is to destroy the family unit in America and we must

Goodbye, sort of

Jay Walljasper, *In These Times* culture editor for the past year and former assistant managing editor, has taken a job as associate travel editor of *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine. As culture editor, Jay was a much appreciated addition to the editorial staff, and we'll miss him. But the good news is that Jay will continue to write for us as a cultural correspondent.

defeat it." The crowd responded by chanting "No ERA" for several minutes.

This theme was echoed by most of the dozen members of Congress who addressed the rally. Rep. Vin Weber (R-Minn.) said, "We have established the ERA-abortion connection, and no one can credibly deny it." Rep. Michael DeWine (R-Ohio) reported, "After listening to 42 hours of testimony" last fall he is convinced "there is a connection." Rep. Barbara Vucanovich (R-Nev.) claimed, "We beat the ERA last session because of the threat to the unborn that it represents." Again, the crowd interrupted with chants of "No ERA."

The only connection explained by any speaker, however, was a political one. When the ERA was debated by the House last November 9, Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) had proposed an amendment to prevent "any right relating to abortion or the funding thereof" from being read into the ERA by future court decisions. Sponsor Don Edwards (D-Calif.) wouldn't permit it or any other amendment to be made, because he knew that the original language was the only wording on which there was a consensus. This and a similar experience with a Wisconsin state

THE STORY INSIDE

ERA is cited as the evidence that "ERA is a code-word for abortion-funding."

The legal basis?

During the march, Nellie Gray was asked what the legal basis was for asserting a connection. She replied that it was explained in Phyllis Schlafley's article in their Journal. But the Journal contains no signed article by Schlafley. Instead, there is a two-page advertisement for the Eagle Forum, Schlafley's personal fiefdom, headlined, "We're Working to Expose the ERA-Abortion Connection." And what follows would hardly qualify as a legal analysis.

Further inquiry about the connection led Gray to respond vehemently, "I'm an attorney and there is a connection." But she would not say what it was beyond repeating her previous statements. When this reporter replied that she was also an attorney, had read all the relevant cases and knew of no legal basis for the claim that the ERA will prohibit any restrictions on abortion or abortion funding, Gray angrily questioned her reportorial credentials, asked what the political affiliation of *In These Times* was and refused to talk any longer.

The ERA was not the only "other" issue for which a connection was attempted during the march, but it was the only one sanctioned by the leadership. Several signs and leaflets passed out to the marchers maintained that to be pro-life one had to stop the arms race as well as abortion. When Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the movement's staunchest Senate supporter, was speaking, a young man with a sign deploring the arms race began yelling, "He's not pro-life." His litany of Helms' "anti-life" positions led Helms to declare, "He's sick."

Helms also said that the abortionists were organizing to defeat his re-election this year. But, he added, "if the price of staying in the Senate is to condone the slaughter of the innocents, then it is too high and I won't pay it."

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IN THESE TIMES

The Independent Socialist Newspaper

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657, (312) 472-5700.

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IN THESE TIMES



By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

FOR THE LAST DECADE, THE American left has been convinced that it has a reasonable program to cure the society's ills, but that it lacks the political means to put that program across. Not only does it lack organization and numbers, but it also lacks a hookup to what people really care about. Over the last years, the programs have changed—for example, one does not hear much about the Humphrey-Hawkins bill any more—but the gulf between programs and politics has barely narrowed.

This gulf was apparent at a January 13-15 conference of left-wing organizers, politicians and intellectuals held at Washington's posh Shoreham Hotel. The 200 participants, who were invited by the Economic Education Project and included such veterans of left conference-going as Machinists President William Winpisinger, economist Gar Alperovitz and Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower, came to discuss "America's Economic Agenda."

Two issues dominated the conference: first, what program the left, or "progressives," should adopt to cure the economy's ills; and second, how that program and the rest of the left's agenda could become the basis of a majority politics in the mid- or late-'80s, if not in 1984.

Speakers who focused on either economics or politics and ignored the other fared best. Those who tried to synthesize the two stumbled into incoherence.

Baby-boom generation.

There was little disagreement about the state of the economy or about the left's program for its improvement. Most participants agreed that the current recovery is taking place in the context of steady economic decline, which began in the early '70s and has been characterized by the "deindustrialization" of much of the Midwest and East and the impoverishment of the blue-collar middle class. Most expected that 1985 would see a return to recession.

The overriding goal of the left's economic program, as articulated by economist Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison or by *New Republic* contributing editor Bob Kuttner is full employment. The means to achieve it are massive public spending on public works, to be paid for by progressive tax increases and by reductions in the military budget. There was some disagreement at the conference about specifics like the corporate tax, but not about these general points.

To assure long-term growth, the participants favored some form of industrial

Left grapples with development of a political program

policy. Many of the conference's panels and workshops were devoted to explaining the left's version of industrial policy. Robert Reich, the author of *The New American Frontier*, distinguished between the "corporatist" economic planning favored by New York financier Felix Rohatyn and AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland and a "democratic industrial policy."

Besides insisting that democratic industrial planners extract a *quid pro quo* from industries they aid, Reich did not spell out how a democratic model would be different from Rohatyn's fantasies. But other participants spoke, or have written of having an elected board or a board appointed and subject to recall by elected officials and having local and state components of the national board.

The major political speeches at the weekend were given by Pat Caddell, Jimmy Carter's pollster and political adviser, and Alan Baron, editor of the *Baron Report*. Both Caddell and Baron have been associated with the center-left rather than the left of American politics. It wasn't clear whether their participation at the Shoreham boded well for left Democrats or poorly for Caddell and Baron.

Caddell's speech was easily the most controversial and widely discussed at the

Washington conference tries to find a socially responsible and politically viable program for a new left politics.

conference. He contended that the key group in American politics is now the baby-boom generation, born during World War II. This group, which he characterized as "fiscally conservative and socially liberal," has yet to decide where "it fits" in American politics.

After the 1980 election, Caddell said, the baby-boom generation helped the Republican Party close the gap on the Democrats in party preference polls, but once it saw that Reaganomics was not simply anti-big government, but also pro-James Watt and the Moral Majority, it signed off the Republican ticket.

According to Caddell, the gender gap, the growing interest in politics among minority voters, the effects of the Reagan recession on the Republican Midwest and the shifting allegiance of the baby-boom generation could cause problems for Reagan in 1984. So could low inflation, which makes the voters think about the future rather than the past or present. "If you had a genuine campaign on the future in 1984," Caddell said, "Ronald Reagan would be very vulnerable."

Left-wing buzzwords.

Caddell cited several themes that he thought pertained to a campaign on the future: "revitalizing the national economy" ("the future is in jeopardy"), deficits ("the future is being stolen from our children"), "revitalizing community life" and the "national interest" in contrast to the "special interests." But Caddell warned that neither the Democratic Party nor the leading presidential candidates were set to wage such a campaign.

"At this moment, the special interests have got the Democratic Party by the throat," Caddell said. Clearly referring to the AFL-CIO, Caddell warned that "if it goes on, the Democrats run the risk of becoming like the British Labour Party."

Caddell did not talk about any of the presidential candidates, but he clearly had Ohio Senator John Glenn and former Vice-President Walter Mondale in mind when he warned of the Democrats adopting "neo-Reaganism" (Glenn) or running on "nostalgia" (Mondale). "If

the choice is between a genuine and an ersatz conservative, the genuine always wins," Caddell said. "If the issue is our past versus his, our interest groups versus his, we will lose."

The conference participants seemed captivated by Caddell in spite of his thinly veiled attack on the AFL-CIO and his vagueness about program. Perhaps they liked him because he convinced them that Reagan could be beaten in 1984. Perhaps they also liked him because Caddell, in talking about the baby-boom generation, was talking about them—in his analysis, they were no longer detached individuals looking for a constituency but the vanguard of a political generation.

But Caddell's speech left some questions unanswered: first, who precisely belongs to the baby-boom generation? Is it only the white college-educated "bean sprout eaters," as Hightower phrased it, or are 35-to-40-year-old blacks and blue-collar whites also included? If so, is it correct to characterize the generation as "fiscally conservative"? Is it even correct to characterize the bean-sprout eaters, who grew up during the war on poverty and the civil rights movement, as fiscally conservative?

Second, is the AFL-CIO a "special interest" and does its participation in the Democratic Party threaten that party with marginality? Is Caddell, who is understandably obsessed with 1984, focusing too much on initial public relations effects of labor's politicization?

Third, what is a campaign about the future? Was Reagan's 1980 campaign, in which he promised to stem America's decline, about the future or the past? Caddell's themes suggest one politician above all—former California Gov. Jerry Brown sloughing through the New Hampshire snow in 1980 talking about deficits as a lien upon the future and the promise of space. But Brown, original though he was, got nowhere.

Caddell's eloquence was achieved partly by avoiding fact and policy and dwelling in the realm of political appearance. But other conference participants tried to find a way in which their analysis and programs—full employment economics and industrial policy—could be sold politically. The results were not pleasant. Men and women of mature minds suddenly found themselves mouthing clichés and buzzwords.

Alperovitz, the left's unofficial economist in Washington, typified the dilemma. He called for a "five-year economic plan that would be taken to the public as a vehicle that can be talked about." (One imagines Bukharin on the hustings.) To make it palatable or interesting, Alperovitz urged that the program be adorned by a "common vision" and that it be "engendered by and rooted in a set of values rooted in community" and that it contain a "longterm vision of community."

But neither Alperovitz nor any of the other speakers indicated what a long-term vision might consist of. Some speakers suggested that full employment might help "communities" in the Midwest, but no speaker that I heard discussed what the concept of community might mean outside of Youngstown. Do suburbanites live in communities?

The only attempt to define a political philosophy appropriate to the left's program came in a paper written for the conference by economist and political consultant Richard Parker. It was filled with useful economic analyses, but his attempts to relate these analyses and programs to "values...embedded in the long course of our human past" were sometimes painful to read.

Like an advertiser trying to bend popular concepts to private purposes ("The Pepsi Revolution"), Parker construed freedom as the freedom to have a job, community as "global community" and efficiency as what "enhances or diminishes equality." Parker's analysis seemed to beg the question it set out to answer—namely, how the left's program speaks to

Continued on page 6

IN SHORT

The other Chavez

Despite declarations of its independence, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is quickly becoming the newest bulwark for Reagan's domestic program. The recently-reconstituted panel first cancelled a study tracing the effect of budget cuts on federal student aid to black and Hispanic colleges and then stopped the release of a study showing the income and educational disparity between blacks and whites in Alabama. As Chairman Clarence Pendleton succinctly put it: "This is not a commission to deal with the problems of the poor. It is not a commission to deal with minorities. It is a commission to study civil rights problems of people, irrespective of pigmentation, gender, fiscal condition or religious persuasion."

So to correct the havoc wrought by the previous commission that tried to take into consideration the messier factors of race and sex in the civil rights quotient, staff director Linda Chavez recently proposed two new studies: one would review the "radical" idea of comparable worth with an eye to the "possibility that white men are being discriminated against in the workplace" and the other will "study the general decline in academic standards that coincide with the advent of affirmative action in universities." All of these studies are to further the commission's goal of a "colorblind nation"—one that is enlightened enough to realize that "economic and social disadvantage among minorities are not necessarily the result of discrimination" but could be due to "other social factors."

Reading the color chart

While the Commission on Civil Rights was busily devising ways to protect whites from discrimination, the Chicago Urban League published a report last November that reinforced the "unenlightened" notion that to be black or Hispanic in a major U.S. city still means less income, less chances to finish high school and a greater probability of unemployment. While no surprise to anyone (perhaps even Linda Chavez, *et al.*), the statistics painted the income disparity between these minority groups and whites in sharp relief. At \$12,716, the average black income in Chicago is half that of the average white. San Francisco-Oakland and Washington, D.C., follow closely on Chicago's heels with income differences in the \$11,000 range. Although in general Hispanics fare slightly better than blacks in the income category, in Boston they have the lowest average income (\$9,586) and the highest differential (\$13,661). Apparently life in the Northeast is especially cruel for Hispanics, with New York and Philadelphia capturing second and third place in the income gap.

Too high a price...

Two weeks ago the Justice Department also lined up against comparable worth by supporting a recent Washington State court appeal of Judge Jack E. Tanner's momentous comparable worth decision last December (see *In These Times*, Jan. 18). Judge Tanner found that the state practiced "direct, overt and institutionalized" discrimination against its women employees and directed the state to pay its women workers up to \$1 billion in back pay. William Reynolds, assistant U.S. attorney general for civil rights, objected to the decision because of the difficulty of assessing the value of jobs and the difficulty of equalizing salaries for jobs determined to be equal in value.

"Ending discrimination costs money," acknowledged Winn Newman, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) lawyer in the Washington state case. "But no one would dare raise that as a reason for continuing to pay blacks less than whites." Although still reviewing the case, Reynolds promises that the Justice Department will fight Tanner's decision, if necessary.

Full coverage

On January 19, 10 days after the Board of Supervisors approved two rent-control ordinances for San Francisco (see *In These Times*, Jan. 18), Mayor Feinstein vetoed the more controversial vacancy control measure that would have imposed rent control on vacant apartments. The San Francisco Housing and Tenants Council (SFHTC) is aggressively lobbying the board for a veto override—only one vote is needed but success seems unlikely given the three intransigent boardmembers who voted against the ordinance. In the meantime, the SFHTC has proposed a short-term legislative program to strengthen eviction protection and serve as a stop-gap until a full vacancy control can be won. One group in the SFHTC coalition, the Affordable Housing Alliance, is taking another tack: they're suing Feinstein for "conflict of interest," hoping that her veto will be judged an "improper political practice." Feinstein owns a residential hotel that would be affected by the vacancy control ordinance, which doesn't wash well with the California Fair Political Practices Act. In any event, the tenacious San Francisco tenants groups seem to have all the angles covered in their fight for fair housing.

—Beth Maschinot

Barbarians hold Chicago Sun-Times captive

CHICAGO—How long will it take Rupert Murdoch to bring sleaze to the Chicago *Sun-Times* was the unstated question of *In These Times*' Inside Story of January 18. The resounding answer: no time at all.

The January 22 *Sun-Times* marked its downward slide to *New York Post*-like journalism with blaring headlines of "Rabbi Hit in Sex Slavery Suit" and "Turncoat Royko Disgusting Creep" and replete with colorful teasers ("Katherine Hepburn's New Passion"). Not content to only tamper with headlines, it

also included a fawning four-page spread on Murdoch decrying the way other papers "smugly dismissed" him as if he were "some kind of yahoo." The article (which originally appeared in the January 30 issue of *Fortune* magazine) went on to defend Murdoch's rampaging entrepreneurship as the natural outcome of a man with "zest and a shrewd sense of the bottom line."

Murdoch was also described as a man with "engagingly iconoclastic attitudes" in a profession in which many members "prefer to think of themselves as above

the mere marketplace." A few *Sun-Times* staffers who requested anonymity report that Murdoch has already taken steps to bring those market forces in line: he imported two outside consultants ("barbarians" in staff parlance)—Charles Wilson of the *Times* of London and Roger Wood, editor of the *New York Post*—to shape the paper into one that is "circulation-led" rather than "advertising-led." This means the emphasis is on journalism that sells newspapers to the masses rather than on quality reporting that attracts advertisers.

Because these changes are being made in an autocratic fashion Woods and Wilson have been party to what is rumored to be the second part of Murdoch's overhaul: resignations through intimidation and outright firings. In a January 18 meeting of the cityside staff and Murdoch-appointed editor Robert Page, an insider notes that a reasonable question surfaced: "How will we keep our black readership if the *Sun-Times* goes conservative?" Reportedly city desk editor Alan Mutter wisecracked, "Zone the editorial page"—or, in other words, write it one way for black distribution and another for the more conservative white ethnics.

Later, Mutter asked Page whether it was true that Murdoch, upon reaching the *Sun-Times*, had asked if there'd "ever been a Catholic paper in Chicago?" Page denied the rumor.

Two days later Mutter gave his two-week notice, whereupon Wilson and Wood pressured Page to oust him immediately. Managing editor Gregory Favre stepped in to reason with Page—

Minority employees are validly alarmed by Murdoch's past hiring record.

arguing that "we can't put a paper out without a city desk editor, in all fairness to others"—and Wilson and Wood had Favre fired.

So far, one source estimates that 27 staffers have departed, and more are expected to leave in the next two weeks. It's likely Murdoch welcomes the exodus, since a staff reduced by resignations gets rid of troublemakers as well as saves money.

Black and Hispanic staffers feel particularly vulnerable to Murdoch tactics, aware that the Murdoch-owned *Post* employs only two black editorial staffers on a paper with 215 employees. When a black reporter quit the *Boston Herald* and wasn't replaced, Murdoch told the inquiring staff that he "couldn't find a replacement."

The chaos at the *Sun-Times* is likely to continue as long as Wilson and Wood retain their "temporary" consulting positions.

As one editorial staffer ruefully jokes, "Since the Murdoch takeover we tick off the days—day 16 of the *Sun-Times* hostage—but everybody who can leave is leaving."

—Beth Maschinot



Peace letter proliferation

Eight months have passed since the Catholic bishops released their touted pastoral on war and peace (see *In These Times*, May 11, 1983). Unlike many bishop's letters that receive only a cursory reading by pastors or teachers, this one is destined to be read and studied by thousands of grassroots Catholics.

In mid-January, the Education Department of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) held a four-day symposium for 147 heads of diocesan peace and justice offices and social concerns agencies. The goal of the symposium: to turn theory into practice by first "making sure the nuclear challenge is

understood in the public mind," according to Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, head of the committee that drafted the pastoral. Bernardin emphasized that the pastoral is a tool of study for Catholics: "This is not a document cast in stone."

John Walsh, consultant for a Catholic publishing house, sees the fact that "any single document is taken so seriously and promoted so widely—the USCC is even spending \$30,000 to make videotapes of the symposium to use nationwide—is unprecedented in the history of bishops' social justice statements."

The department is also developing an educational kit on the pastoral. The address for information about the kit and other resources is the Clearinghouse for the War and Peace Pastoral, USCC, 1312 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

—Beth Maschinot



FRANCE

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

PEUGEOT'S TALBOT AUTO FACTORY in Poissy, west of Paris, began the new year by producing the worst scenes of working-class division of the whole current recession. Split along the lines of race, nationality, status and union membership, strikers and non-strikers hurled bolts, tools, car parts at each other in a display of fury. More than 50 men were injured.

As each wounded North African striker was carried out of the factory on a stretcher, non-striking French workers in the parking lot shouted, "To the ovens!" or "Throw him in the Seine!"

Riot police finally separated the combatants and closed the plant.

French industry is in trouble, and massive layoffs are expected this year in automobile manufacture, steel, coal mines and shipyards. Everyone was watching Talbot-Poissy for signs of how the layoffs will be handled by management, the government and the unions. The harbinger could hardly have been worse.

Talbot-Poissy is not a typical factory. It epitomizes the worst in French labor-management relations. But the confusion with which the case was handled is all too indicative of the backbiting rivalries undermining the left government and labor movement in France.

Last July Peugeot announced plans to lay off 2,905 workers and cut back auto production at its Poissy Talbot plant. Talbot has been losing money since Peugeot bought it (then Simca) from Chrysler. Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy and Employment Minister Jack Ralite, a Communist, obtained a six-month delay for a report to be made on the plant's personnel and on possible ways to save the laid-off workers from unemployment, notably through vocational retraining. The French Communist Party (PCF) is particularly keen on vocational retraining, which it sees as the best way to keep the working class intact during the desired transition of French industry to a more advanced level of technology.

The report submitted in October did not encourage those in favor of the retraining solution, since it indicated that the assembly line workers to be laid off were mostly North Africans who did not speak French and were illiterate even in Arabic, only 12 percent having finished grammar school in their own countries. A third were Moroccan. They were mostly men in their 40s who had worked more than 10 years as unskilled assembly line workers and could not readily contemplate retraining.

But Ralite was anxious to work out a social plan that could be a model for future restructuring.

On December 7, hearing of forthcoming layoffs, several hundred assembly line workers went on strike, occupying their shop floors at the Poissy plant. Tension rose rapidly. French factories employ an unusually high ratio of foremen. According to unionists, the reactionary Peugeot family management preferentially hired veterans of the French colonial forces in Algeria to oversee unskilled North African workers. For many years, the atmosphere was reminiscent at times of a barracks and, at times, of a prison, with the bosses' union, CSL (*Confederation des Syndicats Libres*) running the show.

After Mitterrand's victory in 1981, the Communist-led General Confederation of Labor (CGT) succeeded in organizing foreign workers, long intimidated by CSL toughs, in one auto factory after another. Government labor inspectors entered them to supervise elections for factory committees. At Talbot Poissy, CSL and CGT continued to coexist, with the animosity between them continually threatening to flare up. Recent elections showed CSL influence at 45 percent, mostly foremen and technicians, CGT support at 42 percent and 8 percent for the CFDT (Democratic French Labor Confederation).

Scarcely had the CGT triumphantly organized foreign auto workers than it was threatened by layoffs. Employees who began the December 7 wildcat strike had little union experience. CGT leaders, aware of the explosive potential of a clash between a minority of striking foreign workers and a majority of native workers opposed to the strike, sought a compromise.

On December 17 Mauroy's government announced it had reached an agreement with Peugeot to cut the number of workers laid off from 2,905 to 1,905, with a promise that appropriate measures would be taken on behalf of the workers laid off. Ralite called the agreement "interesting," and the head of the CGT metal workers, Andre Sainjon, immediately issued an approving statement.

The guiding concern in CGT and PCF policy is to preserve French industrial capacity, to "produce French." Thus the CGT slogan was to "save Talbot," and Sainjon reacted favorably to indications that Peugeot had agreed to keep producing Talbot cars at Poissy and even to in-

vest in modernizing the plant.

Moroccan workers were not at all consoled that losing their jobs might help "save Talbot," and the strike went on. In the factory, CGT militants tried to get control of the situation. The local CGT secretary, Nora Trehel, accepted 1,905 layoffs as inevitable and pressed management to negotiate compensation case by case. But meanwhile, Peugeot was washing its hands of the whole matter, preparing to sell its whole Talbot division for a symbolic one franc to the Orleans Auto Repair Company, SORA, a big garage.

It looked as if Peugeot had successfully passed the buck to Mauroy, who passed it to Ralite, who passed it to the CGT, where the problem ended up in the hands of Nora Trehel. From a working-class family, mayor of Lille, Mauroy is of the old-fashioned Socialist school used to dealing with the CGT. He symbolizes the "union of the left." The PCF is apparently ready to show it can be useful to Mauroy at a time when President Mitterrand is under growing pressure to scrap "union of the left," throw the PCF out of the government and create a centrist coalition. The PCF can best help Mauroy by getting the CGT to back up the deals he makes with industrial management.

National CGT policy is to oppose all layoffs on the grounds (increasingly less convincing) that industrial modernization need not entail job losses and that layoffs are usually not to modernize but to shut down a branch (usually true). So at Talbot Poissy, Nora Trehel abruptly found herself obliged to defend a decision contrary to her union's well-known position.

The CFDT also ended up contradicting itself. On the national level, the CFDT accepts the need for abolishing jobs in order to restructure the economy. But at Talbot Poissy the small new CFDT section, headed by idealistic engineer Jean-Pierre Noual, rejected all layoffs and sided with the minority of foreign workers who carried on the strike. The CFDT local in Poissy is far to the left of national CFDT leadership.

On New Year's eve, the government sent riot police to clear out the factory, but when work resumed on January 3 the strikers were back, occupying part of the plant. Confusion mounted. The union locals were not altogether sure what the striking workers wanted. Trehel's and Noual's speeches at meetings in the fac-

A striker at Puissy's Talbot car plant in a January 5 confrontation

tory had to be translated into Arabic. The CGT tried to steer the strikers onto demands for job training and recycling to be negotiated with the bosses, but the bosses would not negotiate.

Not all the fired workers were taking part in the militant occupation. Some of those involved were from outside (Trotzkyist agitators, said the press) and the majority of the plant's 17,000 employees did not support the work stoppage and wanted to get back on the job. Trehel tried to get the strikers to recognize that they would have to modify their demands to correspond to the unfavorable relationship of forces. She suggested a referendum to decide whether to end the strike.

The CFDT sided with the few hundred holdouts who wanted to carry on the strike until all the layoffs were rescinded. The CFDT's reason was that the government and management had taken a decision over the heads of the workers, without consulting the unions, at least not the CFDT. The CFDT accused the CGT of conniving with the government. The CFDT, in turn, fielded numerous accusations of turning to extremism in an attempt to regain popularity lost in recent elections. The CFDT sensed that its image has suffered from being too closely identified with the Socialists and the government, especially Finance Minister Jacques Delors. Recently CFDT leaders from Edmond Maire on down have begun displaying their independence by loud attacks on the government. In fact, Maire's friends in the Socialist Party are only those who, like Delors and Michel Rocard, are called the "second left," who see no need for the union with the Communists, on which the "first left" insists.

As for the holdout strikers, many apparently felt they had nothing to lose. They may fear that, in a time of deepening unemployment and a mounting rightist campaign against foreign workers, if they lost their job at Talbot they would never find another. Some raised the idea of being paid a bonus to give up their social security rights and return to their native countries. But others wanted to stay.

Amidst this uncertainty, uncontrollable violence broke out in the factory on January 5, between the old bosses' union, CSL, and the strikers. Out in the parking lot, held off by riot police, French workers chanted "We want to work" and sang the Marseillaise. Finally, it was Jean-Pierre Noual—the CFDT leader who had encouraged the holdouts—who, shaken and frightened by the violence, called the riot police. "You should have listened to me," Nora Trehel lectured the strikers. "You fell in all of management's traps."

Continued on page 6

Left

Continued from page 3
the values people presently and commonly hold.

Why is the left unable to relate program and politics except by intoning words like "community" and "vision"? My suspicion is that the left has posed the problem incorrectly: it is not "very good at program" (as one speaker put it) and weak at politics, but weak at program and frivolous about politics. Because the left believes it has the programmatic answers, it tends to regard politics as a realm of public relations rather than of public philosophy.

In respect to the left's program for full employment, one must ask whether these programs are—even remotely—capable of achieving their goal. As most left economists would agree, the rise in jobs from 1973 to 1980 was the result of an increase in low-wage service and clerical employment and a temporary increase in manufacturing jobs as cautious employers responded to the Carter boom by hiring new workers rather than investing in labor-saving technology. During the '80s and the '90s, the U.S. can be expected to experience the same trend that West Germany experienced in the '70s: an overall reduction in labor-hours as automation reduces manufacturing and clerical jobs and as the service sector expansion slows.

In the U.S., economic growth may

mean less rather than more jobs. Even the AFL-CIO's public works program would be unable to reduce unemployment more than a few percentage points, and even less than this if it is accompanied by a reduction in military spending.

One must also ask whether, in view of these trends, full employment as historically defined should be the left's principal goal. During the '50s and early '60s, when economists predicted that automation would reduce jobs, some foresaw a time when Americans, with a reduced work week and a guaranteed annual income, could enjoy greater leisure and education and greater opportunity to participate in civic affairs. This understanding of "post-scarcity" or "post-industrial" economics underlay the new left's and the baby-boom generation's preoccupation with "meaningful work," "community" (as a self-created rather than inherited entity) and "taking control of one's life."

The preconditions for post-scarcity economics are still present—if anything, the microelectronic revolution of the last decade has made the potential more apparent—but the effect of that revolution in the context of present-day economic policy has been to increase unemployment rather than leisure, education or participation in political life. Growing unemployment has also fixed the left on goals and slogans that may be more appropriate to the '30s than to the '80s and '90s.

Regarding politics, the left has simply ceded the discussion of the nature of freedom and community to conservatives. At

the American Enterprise Institute's annual conference last December, an entire afternoon's workshop was devoted to a discussion of Robert Nisbet's *The Quest for Community*. Conservative journals like *Modern Age*, *Policy Review* and even *The Public Interest* regularly explore these questions. But when the left discusses politics, it confines itself to discussing opinion polls, party realignment and how to ring doorbells in Hackensack. (The two left-wing journals that sometimes entertained these questions, *Democracy* and *Working Papers*, were closed down by their publishers.)

It is not that polls and pollsters nor the experiences of left organizers are unimportant; they are the means of testing one's ideas for congruence with historical trends. But one has to decide what one's ideas of community and freedom are, and to do that, the left must begin to discuss these subjects with the same rigor and concentration that it discusses Felix Rohatyn's latest fantasies.

I am being overly critical, I know, but only to make a point or two about that abstraction—the left—with which I and many of the readers of *In These Times* identify, rather than to score points at the expense of the Economic Education Exchange's conference. As conferences go, this was one of the more serious and interesting ones, and the same may be said for the speeches and papers given at it.

But left-wing intellectuals, organizers and political operators do experience a certain malaise, if I can use one of Caddell's favorite words, as we ponder our

own prospects. We tend to attribute that malaise entirely to the public's lack of receptivity to our ideas rather than to the coherence of our ideas themselves.

It is time we looked inward as well as outward.

France

Continued from page 5

Even so, the CGT will defend you."

With the CFDT under attack from all sides for "extremism," Edmond Maire counterattacked vigorously. He blamed the government for trying to impose solutions on the workers "in the most authoritarian way" by using the CGT as a "transmission belt." These are fighting words, implicitly likening the Mauroy government to those of Eastern Europe. Attacking the bosses, the Communists and the Socialists, Maire said that "company monarchy, dictatorship over the proletariat and political jacobinism" have more in common than meets the eye. None want to let workers take part in decision-making. That, stressed Maire, is the CFDT's greatest democratic demand which it will not let up.

Maire made his point, in as much as the government's attempt to make a deal with Peugeot without labor-management collective bargaining was a resounding failure. The Socialist Party and even much of the press praised the CGT for its "responsible" behavior.

But this momentary praise will alter the anti-Communist slant of the media. Nor will it substitute for the clear industrial policy that alone could give purpose to the nationalizations, make sense of CGT demands for re-industrialization and give the union of the left a serious lease on life. As Maire himself said last December 14, the government's industrial policy is "inadequate, secret, immobile and incoherent"—and some wonder if such a policy even exists.

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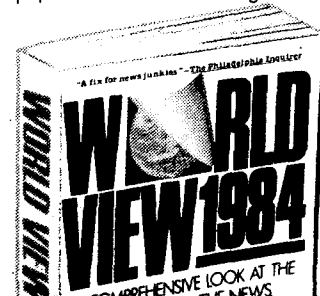
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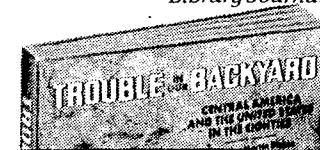


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PANTHEON

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

IF A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERS can't solve their people's problems, at least they can keep them entertained. And what better entertainment at the start of an unpromising year like 1984 than the "affair of the sniffer planes," a top-secret electronic device for spotting oil deposits that never struck oil but succeeded in draining about a billion francs from the French state oil company ELF between 1976 and 1979?

Those were the years of France's most high-tech president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, when the national slogan was, "We French don't have petroleum, but we have ideas." *Habemus ideae sed petroleum nihil* could be blazoned on the coat of arms of the main "inventor," Belgian Count Alain de Villegas de Saint-Pierre Jette, who was short on scientific credentials but long on name and connections

more than \$130 million through the Swiss banks and down the gilded rathole.

What ELF executives got for their money was not oil but an almost endlessly resourceful *commedia dell'arte* act by Villegas and Bonassoli. In May 1979 somebody finally dared put them to a test with a trap in it and the jig was up. Omega only showed images it had been fed. The deal was off. The Count disappeared. Bonassoli turned out to be a modest TV repairman from a small town near Bergamo, very skilled in producing illusions on cathodic screens and with a matchless ability to lie with a sort of naive sincerity. For three years the crackpot Count and his Italian thinker had kept ELF engineers hopping, with their screens that always broke down at just the wrong (or right) moment, their eccen-

seems a key.

Genuine scientists in France might be suspected of left sympathies, making them unreliable consultants for an international oil coup. The septagenarian Villegas was a crank, whose scientific credentials consisted in railing against Einstein's theory of relativity and in predicting that extraterrestrials would save a small elite from the destruction of the earth in the year 2000. But he had friends in European high society.

The sniffer's main promoter was an extraordinarily well-connected international lawyer named Jean Violet, living in retirement on the French riviera. His laur-

els include a papal decoration, the Order of Saint Gregory awarded by Pope Paul VI, services rendered to the French intelligence agency SDECE and quite an array in that, he said, would provide an opportunity to make new contacts and obtain allocation of a "budget, which is a sort of consecration."

According to the conspiratorial interpretation, then, the real purpose of the sniffer gambit was to siphon ELF money into the coffers of certain mysterious rightist organizations. Evidence for this theory is purely circumstantial, resting mainly on the fact that the "inventors" themselves seem not to have made off with the huge sums that vanished without a trace into "Project X." Bonassoli claims to have received only a rather modest salary from the Count. The Count is now reportedly ruined and his lavish spending during the three-year project by all accounts nevertheless falls far short of the billion franc total. Was

FRANCE

"Sniffer" affair leaves trails

among the "best people."

ELF largesse enabled the Count to renovate his dilapidated chateau outside Brussels and christen it "Fundamental Research Center," apparently referring to the fact that the Count's private imported Italian genius, Aldo Bonassoli—the only man who knew how to make the sniffers sniff—was stuck up in the attic with his contraptions complaining about all the noise from the workmen.

The term "sniffer" was invented by the *Canard Enchaîné*, the French satirical weekly that broke the story. Grateful journalists and cartoonists have snapped it up. In reality, Bonassoli's contraptions were purported not to "sniff" but to "see" petroleum deposits by a rigorously secret process that looked through the ground and reproduced what it "saw" on computer screens.

According to the official Gicquel report hushed by Giscard and just published by Socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, ELF president Pierre Guillaumat and Giscard himself were bedazzled by the exalted level of the "international financial group" sponsoring the invention and by France's "opportunity" to get ahead of the rest of the world in the oil race. Amazingly few questions were asked and none were answered. Nothing was disclosed about the theoretical basis or practical working of the process. The inventors' eccentric passion for secrecy even ruled out getting their priceless system patented. If anyone got nosy, the Count would throw a tantrum and threaten to take his invention to Exxon.

Something smells rotten.

The only tests conducted by ELF prior to signing over its millions were rigorously unscientific. The "Delta" and "Omega" (as they were called) selective visual detection devices were tried out by the inventors on French terrain already prospected by ELF. Eureka! The "Delta" squealed with delight where ELF knew there was oil and "Omega" turned out pictures of what ELF knew was already there.

Thrilled by these promising results, ELF chairman Guillaumat on May 28, 1976, signed the first of three annual contracts with Alain de Villegas for exclusive use of the mysterious process. The contracts were signed in Switzerland, where accounts were opened and secret companies founded, some licensed in Panama, or Liechtenstein or Luxembourg—all with the blessings of Philippe de Weck, president of the Union des Banques Suisses (UBS). The money began to flow. But not the oil.

In the next three years, ELF poured

tritic demands, their quarrels and the endless problems of their "unperfected" technology.

In Zululand, for example, the sniffers sent ELF prospectors drilling for a deposit Omega had located at a depth of 4,600 meters. Nothing there? A second reading put the deposit at 5,650 meters. At 6,083 meters the drilling equipment reached its limits and broke down. Too bad, the sniffers said: the oil is really at a depth of 6,200 meters. Their genuine skill was in rationalizing failure.

The Gicquel report concluded that the same amount of money would have produced better results if less ambitious and more realistic attempts had been made using standard geological methods. France's whole oil strategy may have been distorted by the mirage on Bonassoli's screens.

The Gicquel report was destroyed, except for copies that Giscard and former Prime Minister Raymond Barre took with them when they left office. Mauroy recuperated a copy from Barre and published it on January 2.

Giscard reacted with fury. He virtually accused the Socialists of sacrificing national interests to partisan gain and announced that Mitterrand had proved himself unfit to be president. This overreaction seems to have done him more harm than good, reminding everyone of the right's arrogance.

Two scandals.

The Socialists have two scandals to blame on Giscard: first, falling for the swindle, and second, covering it up.

The sniffer scandal is open to varying interpretations. On the most obvious level, the left can derive satisfaction from evidence that the right, for all its arrogant claims to be supremely realistic and competent, was taken in by a magic act fit for a carnival. To many, class prejudice

of friends, including Henry Kissinger, David Rockefeller, Franz Josef Strauss, Giulio Andreotti, leading financiers and prelates of the Roman Catholic Church. With his particularly close friend, former French Prime Minister Antoine Pinay, in tow, Violet sold the Villegas scheme to another SDECE "old boy," ELF president Guillaumat. Violet, according to the Gicquel report, was legal counsel for the "powerful international financial group" believed to be "sponsoring" the Villegas "Project X."

These connections give rise to the second interpretation, which is more conspiratorial. Pinay and Violet are leading lights of a certain Catholic right with

Was it a right-wing project?

aspirations to a unified "greater Europe," including a decommunized Eastern Europe. They congregate at annual Charlemagne Dinners, dedicated to the renewal of Charlemagne's dream of a great united Christian Europe. Their leader seems to be Otto von Hapsburg, heir to the Austro-Hungarian dynasty, Christian Democratic member of the European parliament and president of the Pan-European Union and other organizations favoring "greater Europe."

Alain de Villegas moved in these illustrious circles. He was a friend of the late Florimond Damman, the Belgian director of a European Academy of Political Sciences devoted to Pan-European Hapsburgian ideas and whose only clear activity was the search for funds to finance its activities. According to documents obtained by the Belgian journalist Walter de Boch, Alain de Villegas wrote to Damman in August 1974 in happy anticipation of a forthcoming meeting in Wash-

the whole scam a rightist fundraising project?

Other clues point to still another interpretation. The Count de Villegas' original backer was 76-year-old Italian financier and cement tycoon Carlo Pesenti, currently living in retirement in Monaco after a lucrative career that reportedly owed much to his connections in the Vatican and the upper reaches of the Italian Christian Democratic Party. Along with the late Roberto Calvi, found hanged from Blackfriars Bridge in London on June 18, 1982, Pesenti has been considered one of the bankers most closely linked to the Institute for Religious Works (IOR), the Vatican bank, which is involved in strange international capital transfer scandals. The sniffers affair might be essentially a financial rather than a political maneuver.

Such an affair would not be complete without a CIA connection. This is still being sought, but the search starts with Daniel Boyer, described as an American professor of Eastern European origin (some reports say Polish, some say Yugoslav), European chairman of American Democrats Abroad and an occasional spokesman for Jonas Savimbi, the Angolan guerrilla leader backed by South Africa.

According to *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, Boyer's publishing ventures include a place on the board of a right-wing Belgian weekly, *l'Evenement*, and control of Prelate Corporation, which puts out art books on the basis of its exclusive copyright for the Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana. It was Boyer who, with capital imported from Delaware in 1979, bought out the Compagnie Européenne de Recherches (CER) set up to develop Villegas' invention—which leads some Europeans to believe that the sniffer really works after all and may even now be sniffing out Soviet nuclear submarines. ■



ELECTION '84

McGovern: a real alternative to Reagan

By David Moberg

DES MOINES, IOWA

WHEN FORMER SENATOR George McGovern entered the fray for the Democratic presidential nomination, he was at first portrayed as a laughable Don Quixote, riding his nag in a futile adventure. But as he warmed up his late-starting campaign, he found a respectful, almost reverential response even among the skeptics and many Democrats who support his opponents.

His message—spelled out succinctly in a 10-point program—is a clear alternative to Reagan and to many of the other Democratic contenders. It is delivered with a conviction and thoughtfulness that conveys the impression of a fundamentally decent man unafraid to speak his mind. Now the 1972 peace candidate for president is beginning to look to many like Sir George the Good, riding a political white horse.

Yet as McGovern attempts to repeat his 1972 march to nomination, when he started even lower in the polls than he has been this year and was catapulted into contention by a second-place showing in the Iowa Democratic caucuses, he is actually travelling the by-ways of Iowa in the custom-built Winnebago of former trucker Lloyd Van Zuuk and his wife Norma, accompanied by his wife Eleanor—who says she always supported his candidacy, contrary to early reports—and, for a while, retired farmer Leonard Denholm. Moved by McGovern's pledges to feed the hungry and fight "military madness," these loyal supporters are a reminder that McGovern's appeal reaches beyond the stereotyped "peaceniks" to the equally stereotyped "middle Americans."

McGovern doesn't claim to know whether his ideas are popular today, but if he runs well, even if he ultimately loses, he may at least have provided a voice for those Democrats who share his supposedly radical views that actually seem like simple prairie-style common sense.

At an agricultural issues forum that drew 2,000 to the campus of Iowa State University in Ames, McGovern demonstrated his well-earned popularity with many farmers. He was the clear winner in the debate, in which Sen. Gary Hart also scored points and Sen. Alan Cranston lost some.

McGovern favored price supports and loans that would bring farm product prices to 90 percent of parity (the historic pre-World War I relationship of agricultural and industrial prices), long-term agricultural planning, expanded food programs for the needy here and overseas, conservation of land, a moratorium on farm foreclosures and U.S. participation in "managed trade" agreements with other major grain exporters to raise and stabilize prices.

He addressed consumers' worries ("If we drive the family farmer out and replace them with corporations, consumers will find out what high food prices are") and sneaked in his disarmament message with a response to a troubled farmer who asked for advice on how to save his farm. If you can hang on until a Democrat wins

in November, you may have a chance, McGovern said. But "if Reagan wins, I'd sell the farm and buy a bomb shelter."

The core of McGovern support in 1984 comes from the faithful of 1972, including some who had in intervening years given up hope about politics. But there are hard-nosed professionals among them, like his state campaign coordinator, Judy Wilson, who is chair of the Democratic Party in Polk County (Des Moines). "My first reaction was, 'Oh, why is he going to do that again?'" she said. "Then I heard him at the Jefferson-Jackson dinner and I was excited. I said, 'Wilson, you've got to be with somebody with principle.' I had to be at peace with myself, and McGovern is at peace with himself. He knows he's doing the right thing."

The most recent Iowa poll conducted by the *Des Moines Register* showed Mondale with a commanding lead, Glenn slipping and Hart, Cranston and McGovern tied in third place with 6 percent each. But most campaign managers think that half or more of Iowa Democrats are still undecided. Cranston picked up much of the organized peace activist support early on, but McGovern has been chipping away at support for Cranston, who is vulnerable because of his continued support of the B-1 bomber, his acceptance of campaign funds from a number of big defense contractors and his commitment to a real increase in the defense budget.

McGovern broadens those peace issues. At Old Brick, a church turned community center on the University of Iowa campus, for example, he told the crowd of 250 that even without Russia and Cuba, there would be revolutions in Central America, much as the U.S. started with a revolution against much less onerous conditions.

"The question is which side are we going to be on," he asked, "the side of people who are trying to break free from the kind of exploitation and oppression they have faced for generation after generation, or are we going to use the wealth and power and prestige of this country to back the very regimes that have been responsible for the upheavals? ...I don't say for a moment that I endorse everything that those insurgencies have done and conditions they themselves have set, but what I do say...it's against the values of this country...for us to be backing every regime in power in Central America simply because it has worked out its arrangements with the corporate interests that have invested there and then ignored the conditions that produced revolution in the first place."

McGovern favors an immediate, unilateral freeze (Cranston recently said he would freeze testing and deployment on entering office) and wants to cut the military budget 20 to 25 percent below current levels by stopping the MX, the B-1 bomber and deployment of the Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe, by gradually reducing U.S. troops in Europe by half and eliminating troops in South Korea by the end of the century, and by attacking the massive waste in the Pentagon that even conservatives acknowledge.

"Why should it be McGovern instead of Jackson, Hart, Cranston, Mondale or anyone else?" he asked rhetorically. "One clear-cut difference that I ask you

to remember is that...with the exception of the McGovern campaign, what we have so far is an argument among candidates about how much the increase should be year after year after year in the military budget, when I'm arguing that this country would be stronger, more secure and a happier place if we slashed that military budget in the range of 20 to 25 percent."

McGovern argues that the savings from the military, repeal of the 1981 tax act and other tax reform would permit financing of other programs he advocates—such as public works projects to clean up the environment, rebuild roads, bridges, sewers and water systems and build a mixed publicly and privately owned railroad system by the year 2000 that will rival any in the world—his version of John Kennedy's pledge to put a man on the moon. He also wants to provide guaranteed home mortgage loans at 10 percent or less interest, low-cost loans for education or job training to all Americans (with repayment collected by the Internal Revenue Service), and federal assumption of welfare and Medicaid costs to free states to spend more on crime control and education. Guarantee of equal rights for all, including passage of the ERA, rounds out his program.

While traveling with McGovern in Iowa, I talked with him about his campaign and the prospects for his brand of politics.

Apart from having a crack at the nomination, what other motivation do you have for entering the race?

I wanted to get some of the issues into the forum that were not even being talked about. You know that at the time I announced, no other candidate was even talking about Central America. It was like about where we were in Vietnam from '61 to '65, drifting in deeper and deeper. My second point was to get out of Lebanon now. Nobody had even hinted that we should disengage in Lebanon.

How would you negotiate an arms control treaty with the Soviet Union?

I would have a series of meetings with the Soviet leaders and make it clear a new day was here and that as far as I was concerned we could not settle our disputes with them on a military basis. I would say I'm going to call for substantial cutbacks in American military spending, partly because it would be good for our economy, partly because it would relieve international tensions. I would strongly urge

"We would be more secure if we slashed the military budget by 20-25 percent."

that there be some reciprocal action. If there is, that would open the door to some further steps. In the meantime, we would get our negotiators together to see if there were some areas for mutual cuts.

Carter made proposals such as yours to cut foreign troop commitments, but got nowhere on them. What is the stumbling block?

There are highly articulate, aggressive hawks within the Democratic Party who assail everything as a sell-out to the enemy. The president is just going to have to stand up and take his lumps on that and keep reassuring the public that we have the strength we need. If the president was just as tough on the peace side of the equation as Reagan has been on the militarization of foreign policy, he would have a chance of prevailing.

It was surprising to see you include a normalization of relations with Cuba as one of your 10 basic points.

My maiden speech in the Senate in 1963 was for normalization of relations with Cuba. I think that all of our problems in

Central America is that we have built up this hysteria about Castro when with a little diplomacy and economic incentives we could have him halfway into our camp. If the Soviets can't manage problems in Poland and Afghanistan, how are they going to run operations in Central America? They couldn't tell Castro what to do if we gave him some other option.

One of the biggest problems facing Third World countries now is obviously the debt hanging over them and possibly over the rest of us. What would you do about it?

I think some of the Third World agenda that they've been pushing at the UN makes sense—stabilize commodity prices for some of these developing countries. It would be good for the American farmer, too. It would be good for the U.S. as a whole because our major balance of payments position is sustained by agricultural exports. So I would pick up this idea of international pricing agreements for commodities. I remember some years ago our ambassador to Chile told me a 10-cents-a-pound increase in coffee prices would do more to stabilize Latin America than all American aid programs.

You mentioned you would favor greater restrictions on U.S. corporations' export of capital.

I don't think that American companies should be permitted to use funds that have been acquired on operations in this country to move their plant to Taiwan and deduct the whole operation as a legitimate business expense. The whole purpose of that is to go after low-cost labor and export back into the American market. We ought to be able to devise some formula under which a company that does that would have to pay a premium that would take care of the transition of their previous workers. You could set it high enough so that they would lose their competitive advantage in moving their plant in the first place.

What approach do you see for dealing with a couple of the classic troubled industries—auto and steel?

The deterioration of the competitive position of autos and steel is a direct outgrowth of 40 years of putting our best scientific and engineering personnel into military industries and neglecting the modernization of industrial plant. Moving away from this escalating arms race would be a strong move toward correcting that imbalance.

In the short run, there may have to be some program of direct assistance to those industries to help them carry out a program of modernization and to protect workers in those plants. Some of them may have to be retrained and assisted through this transitional period. I voted for the Chrysler loan, a risky thing at the time, but it looks like it was a good public investment. But I think the domestic content legislation is a bad piece of legislation. I'm told that it would add about \$1,000 to the price of a car.

There's another problem that bothers me about American industry. American managers are concentrating more on manipulating the tax laws and mergers so that they starve innovative production techniques, modernization of plant, democratizing the workplace by involving workers in the decision-making.

Is there any way government policies can influence that?

It's not basically a government responsibility if we're going to claim to have a private enterprise system. But the way the tax system is now drawn up, a company gets the same tax reward for buying another company as they do for developing a better automobile or investment in new plant, techniques and technology. So one thing we could do is drop tax write-offs for any purpose other than production, innovation and upgrading the status of workers.

What do you see as the prospect for the Democratic Party?

Realistically, it's just an outside chance that you can turn the Democratic Party around. I think I could do it if I got nom-

inated and elected, but I doubt through influence over others you could accomplish a fundamental change. The Democratic Party is pretty hidebound. It's married to the Cold War. It's involved almost as much as the Republicans are in the arms race. It doesn't seem to have great moral forces that are moving the party today comparable to the civil rights battles of the '50s and '60s or the Vietnam war. The party just doesn't appear to be sensitive to the needs of change as it might have been in years past.

What does that say to those on the progressive end of the political spectrum? Are the Democrats to be written off in favor of a third party?

It says the Democrats are still a hope, but a shaky one. I wouldn't blame people for seeking a third alternative. I'm not ready to go that route myself, but I fully understand why some people have. Time is running out for the Democrats to be the party of change, the party of reform, the party of peace and justice.

Has your defeat and the Reagan victory led you to rethink your own politics? I notice your talking about school funding at the state level seems to be an attempt to adjust.

That's right. I have to concede that. It was an effort to underscore one of the conservative values of state and local control of education but to recognize the funding problem by offering a formula to deal with it. The same thing on military cutbacks: if you talk about it only in terms of improving relations with the Soviets or peace, then a number of conservatives might be turned off. But if you talk about waste, you may achieve the same result as if your goal is to cut back on military spending and the arms race.

Obviously your entry into the race was an expression of disappointment with the other candidates. What are your thoughts about Mondale?

I think Mondale would be a pretty good president if he's elected. I think he would be good on economic issues and social policy. I'm a little bit worried about whether he would stand up to the Pentagon and some of the neo-conservative interests in the party that want a very hard line, but he'd be a dramatic improvement over Reagan in the handling of foreign and national defense policy.

I think he thinks the mood of the country won't sustain him through to victory if you're as far out as I am. I think he agrees with virtually everything I say but doesn't think it's saleable. I remember right after the Grenada invasion. I said to him, "Fritz, don't you think this Grenada thing is the most preposterous thing we've done?" He said, "Well, it may be, but it's popular." He didn't contest it, only that reporters were excluded.

Can Mondale win if he's nominated?

If he's in trouble with Reagan it's because of the enormous amount of money Reagan will have and because he's a professional showman and Fritz is not. I think Fritz Mondale can beat Reagan. It won't be easy. If he does it will be because of these various groups lining up behind him and getting their members out.

He has to convince the country that he feels deeply about his positions. There's too much lethargy and ease in that campaign and not enough banging the hard issues that people are worried about.

I think the Democrats ought to come down as being more progressive than they are. They ought not to worry about being accused of being big spenders, putting the power of the state over our lives. If the Democrats try to come across as conservative, cautious, not too different from Reagan, then I think Reagan will win. He may win anyway, but that's the way to make it easiest for him.

A lot of people say complimentary things about you then worry that voting for you would waste their votes, that you can't win.

What people ought to do in these primaries and caucuses is vote their conscience, not try to guess who the frontrunner is. A major part of this is to indicate the direction you'd like to see the party go. You can't do that if you're voting for a candidate who doesn't represent that direction.

So take your chance on losing. If the frontrunner is really a frontrunner, he's going to win anyway. But I think it's very important to that frontrunner to know that somebody with a different perspective has a lot of support.

On the campaign trail McGovern has humor and humility that underscore the impression so many quickly get of him as a sincere, trustworthy political leader who has remained remarkably consistent in his convictions. At Grinnell a student asked him who he would pick as vice-president if he won the nomination. "Well, I have to tell you I haven't thought a lot about that," he said, evoking laughter that undercut the identification of McGovern as the loser, both in 1972 and his 1980 Senate race. That is part of the negative baggage with which he has to contend.

"He seems so much more of a politician than Glenn or Mondale, more of a diplomat," Grinnell junior Jeanne Hughes said. "He sticks to the issues that he's been with since I first started hearing him way back. I like it when they stay with what they believe instead of chang-

ing with society:"

But her friend Anne Stein said, "I'm not going to vote for him, but I'm impressed with him. I respect him. He seems to have got mellow as he got older. I like his ideas. I'm for Mondale because I think he has the best chance of winning. Most people won't give McGovern a chance. Besides I've gotten more conservative."

McGovern has recast his liberal ideas in ways that acknowledge but do not necessarily compromise with traditional values. His strong views on foreign policy, however, accentuate the deep division that persists within the Democratic Party. But the gap may not be as great at the bottom as it seems at the top: unlike the hawkish national AFL-CIO, the Iowa Federation of Labor and many individual unions support the nuclear freeze and are very critical of Reagan's foreign policy, for example.

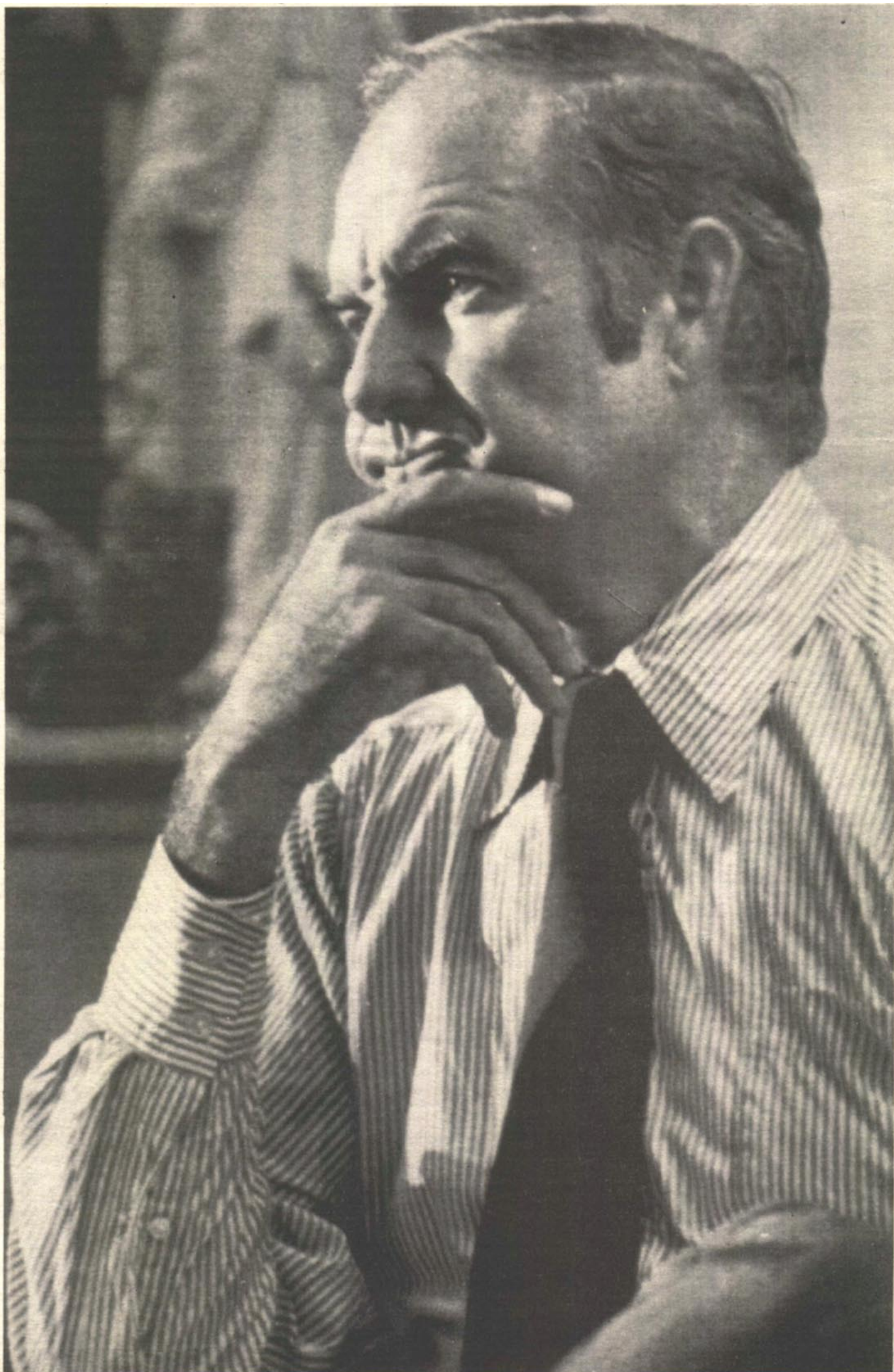
McGovern acknowledges that the party rules and the timing of the primaries this year were recast precisely to prevent the kind of grassroots, popular campaign that brought him the nomination in 1972. Yet he feels that he has already succeeded

in broadening debate and may at the very least push the party to adopt a clear alternative to Reaganism. If he places among the top four in Iowa and New Hampshire, then does well in Massachusetts, he thinks his candidacy could take off.

At the end of the day he scored his agricultural debate success, George and Eleanor McGovern joined Lloyd and Norma Van Zuuk at their Elks Lodge dance. Ralph Zarnow's band paused late in the evening while the Elks solemnly gathered to observe the tolling of 11 bells for all absent Elks and recognition of "the throbbing heart of Elkdom" throughout the world. Then Judy Wilson took the microphone.

"George McGovern is the most honest politician you could find," she said. Then, turning toward McGovern, she added, her voice breaking with emotion, "I haven't told you this to your face, but it takes a tremendous amount of courage to come back and try to do it again."

"Judy didn't tell anything about my most courageous act," McGovern responded. "I never demonstrated it before. I got out on the dance floor tonight and danced in public."



LETTERS

In These Times is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

TENANTS

JOAN WALSH'S ARTICLE ON RENT CONTROL in San Francisco (*ITT*, Jan. 18) falls short of describing the nature of the strong tenants movement in the city.

The basis of that strength is a unique alliance of tenants organized into housing associations, Old St. Mary's (Catholic church) Housing Committee (with 800 members), other church bodies, unionists, senior citizens groups, community organizations, civil rights and ethnic groups, gays, etc. Left groups like Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA), the Democratic Socialists of America and the Committee for Economic Democracy are also involved in coordinated actions to strengthen the city's rent stabilization ordinance.

Walsh described AHA as a coalition, but it is only one part of the coalition known as the San Francisco Housing and Tenants Council. The Affordable Housing Alliance is an important part of the housing movement. It is a left organization with some 200 members who work with the city-wide coalition and as a strong independent force.

The San Francisco Housing and Tenants Council was formed less than a year ago as a result of an agreement by leaders in the housing and tenants movement. It was begun by Joe Lacey of Old St. Mary's Housing Committee, Bill Daley of Tenants for a Condo Mortatorium, Wally Park, director of Independent Housing Services, Mitchell Omerberg of AHA and the tenant association chairpersons of the four largest apartment housing complexes in the city.

The complexes, Golden Gateway Center, Park Merced, Stonestown and John Muir, have more than 6,100 apartments, with more than half as members of their tenants associations. These are affiliated with the tenants council, as are 36 other groups representing 25,000 of the city's 200,000 tenants. This growing, active membership base has sparked the movement to low-

er automatic yearly rent increases, put a lid on allowable vacant apartment rents, restrict condominium conversions, halt illegal evictions and the pressures that cause tenants to move.

Though Mayor Dianne Feinstein vetoed vacancy controls, the SFHTC has pledged to have this matter brought back again through the legislative and executive process as soon as feasible.

—William Sennett
San Francisco

Editor's note: William Sennett was co-publisher of In These Times 1977-83.

TENANTS

THANKS FOR YOUR EXCELLENT COVERAGE of the rent control battle in San Francisco (*ITT*, Jan. 18). Your article contained one point of misinformation in that the Affordable Housing Alliance was identified as a coalition. AHA is an individual membership organization. It participates in a coalition of tenant groups called the San Francisco Housing and Tenants Council.

—Mitchell Omerberg
Affordable Housing Alliance
San Francisco

BLOOD AND PROTRUDING GUTS

I WILL NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH JAMES Gilbert's review of *Scarface* (*ITT*, Jan. 11) as it relates to the use or misuse of violence. It seems to me that Brian de Palma could have made his point with far less blood and dismemberment (perhaps not created the media hype around the rating controversy mentioned in the review).

But a significant political statement seems to have been missed. At two points the film specifically underlines

the connection of "the establishment" with the antics of the Montana character. One has to do with the issue of "money laundering" through legitimate banking institutions and the other in a scene depicting high-level State Department involvement in drug trafficking and assassination. To read Gilbert's review neither of these issues, regarding the duplicity of the "law and order" community, would seem to have been made in the film. For these scenes, not to mention a sterling performance by actor Al Pacino, I would recommend this film to *ITT* readers (after warning them about the violence).

Gilbert writes that "in the end, the satire of capitalism is blunted by the fall of the gangster and the triumph of law and order." But to imagine that "law and order" triumphed at the end of this film the audience would need to be as "high" as some of the characters portrayed in the film.

—Mark Coby
Chicago

EFFICACY OF TERROR

VERY PROBABLY, RONALD REAGAN now holds the all-time record for the most belligerent violent acts launched by an American president within a short period. Look at the record: the invasion of Grenada, covert military operations in Nicaragua and Honduras, major involvement in El Salvador, intervention in Chad and the downing of Libyan aircraft, American troops and ships firing at Lebanese to prop up the minority government of Amin Gemayel and, most recently, the bombing of Soviet-supported Syrians in Lebanon.

What a remarkably boundless faith in the efficacy of terror! And yet, one could chart a reliable mathematical formula to predict how counterproductive and dangerous such unprovoked terrorism is. Take Lebanon, where Reagan hypes the myth of the Marines as non-partisan "peacekeepers." Here the American Navy has several times fired 18-inch guns into urban neighborhoods in Beirut, inescapably killing innocent civilians. If only one aggrieved survivor of those attacks resolved to settle the score with the U.S., he could have driven the truck laden with explosives into the Marine compound.

The only way to put an end to these grave threats to world peace is to vote the madman committing them out of office.

—Mitchell Kaidy
Rochester, N.Y.

SHOCKED

I WAS SHOCKED BY SHIRLEY WASHINGTON's letter (*ITT*, Sept. 21) which not only defended Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* from the "charge" that it was polemical but also swallowed and exuded one of its worst features—its anti-Semitism.

Your readers should know that when the book was published it was roundly condemned as anti-Semitic in several radical black and other publications:

1) In the *Black Scholar* for November 1979 Prof. Robert Chrisman, editor of the magazine, wrote, "There is a vicious anti-Semitism throughout the work. When faced with complexity, Cruse finds the nearest scapegoat and furiously lashes his way out of the jam...."

2) In *Freedomways*, a Marxist quarterly, in the issue of the First Quarter 1969, Ernest Kaiser wrote, "Cruse's statement that minority Jewish nationalism is more successful than majority Anglo-Saxon nationalism, is absurd and anti-Semitic. His treatment of Negro-Jewish relations is way off...."

3) In the *National Guardian* for Jan. 27, 1968, the militant black lawyer Conrad Lynn, wrote, "The third obsession of Harold Cruse is the relation of Jews to Negroes...taking the store from the Jewish merchant would hardly change the class status of the black masses...."

It is Cruse's anti-Semitism, as perceived by such black writers as those quoted above, that Shirley Washington reflects with her intemperate cracks about "those Jewish cultural zealots" and "some of the Jewish bigwigs like Goldman in the [Communist Party] at the time." What Goldman can she be talking about? The only Goldman in Cruse's book is Emma Goldman, who was an anarchist not a Communist and had nothing to do with the situation. Nor is there a Goldman listed in the index to the book by Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, to whose review by Maurice Isserman (*ITT*, July 28) Shirley Washington was reacting.

—Morris U. Schappes
Editor, *Jewish Currents*

NO SUCH THING

I DON'T USUALLY RESPOND TO THE ill-informed anti-Communist, anti-Soviet sideswipes that clutter the pages of *In These Times*, but the slanderous comments found in Lawrence Wolf's letter (*ITT*, Jan. 11) ought not to pass unchallenged. Wolf attacks something he calls "the old Marxist attitude" because it supposedly teaches "that all morality is a bourgeois fraud and that socialists therefore need have no moral scruples in their pursuit of power."

Marxist and Marxist-Leninists say no such thing. They do say that many moral rules in bourgeois society are class-bound and are fundamentally unjust in their effects. Law, which is supposedly an instrument of morality, is used as a weapon of class control. "Revolutionary morality" is not an amoral opportunism but an attempt to apply standards of justice that are favorable to the interests of the great mass of people. If Marxist revolutionaries do not always feel bound by the rules of bourgeois society, it is because they understand that the rules are rigged against them and that the ruling class itself seldom abides by such rules. As Salvador Allende found out, the rules are intended as a constraint against change but not as a restraint against those who would use murderous violence to prevent change.

Wolf goes on to say: "It is this cynical amorality that has contributed to the use of ex-Nazi thugs by the Leninist regimes of Eastern Europe...." This lie, repeated widely since the '40s, has been embraced by people who cannot tell their East from their West. In truth, Nazi thugs were quickly put back into government and business in West Germany, placed in charge of postwar reconstruction, their property and wealth restored to them. Among the more notorious are former Nazi commander Reinhard Gehlen who was made head of West German military intelligence, Klaus Barbie and scores of others like him, who came to the U.S. to serve as agents.

In contrast, East Germany tried and convicted nearly 13,000 Nazis for war crimes. All Nazi school teachers and judges, some 80 percent of both professions, were removed from their positions and replaced by anti-fascists of mostly working-class and peasant origin. Leading positions in the East German army were filled by former resistance fighters and veterans of the International Brigade. All property belonging to Nazis was confiscated.

—Michael Parenti
Associate Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies
Washington

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

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PERSPECTIVES

Dangers in Cold War revival

By Leon Wofsy

ON DEC. 7, 1983, A DEBATE took place at the North Berkeley Senior Center between Peter Collins, U.S. State Department and Hoover Institute, and Leon Wofsy, professor of immunology, University of California, Berkeley, on the topic of "East-West Confrontation—How to Cool It." The following is the edited transcript of Wofsy's talk.

The fall of 1983 saw a major escalation of the Cold War. Cruise and Pershing missiles arrived in Europe and the Geneva talks were broken off. This coincided with deeper U.S. military involvement in Lebanon. It came on top of a series of flame-fanning episodes: the shooting down of the Korean airliner, the bombing of marines in Beirut and the Grenada invasion.

There are two ways of looking at the succession of crisis events. One is to see in all of them how bad the Russians are, and that the Russians are everywhere. Another is to see proof in each of them of how dangerous the Cold War is, and that we and the Soviets had both better get out of this mess before it's too late.

Our president shows us the first way of looking at things. He has said: "Let's not delude ourselves. The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hot spots in the world" (*New York magazine*, March 9, 1981).

To try the other way of looking at things, I will choose the incident that provoked the most inflammatory treatment:

The time is past when either side could seriously consider world supremacy.

the tragedy of KAL 007, which was presented as proof that we are dealing with monsters, much unlike ourselves. The single most important fact is that the whole episode took two-and-one-half hours, over the most sensitive military defense areas of the Soviet Union. And in the end the Soviets apparently did *not* know they were shooting down a 747—this despite intense American surveillance and tracking of the flight by the Japanese, despite desperate efforts by the Soviet military to find out what was going on. Over that whole time span there was no communication that could have averted disaster. The compelling lesson is what comes of Cold War psychosis. It is certainly not the need for more hatred and talk of monsters. Especially now, with Cruise and Pershing missiles in the picture—when we're counting in minutes rather than hours—it is insane to rely on military men and technological robots to provide safeguards for the world.

Should one think that the tragic ineptitude demonstrated in this instance is a Soviet monopoly, one need only remember Vietnam and accidents where Americans fired on and killed Americans. In Cold War conditions, ineptitude coupled with provocation or accident can bring on disaster.

There isn't time in today's discussion to trace the history of U.S.-Soviet antagonism, to list all the "credits" on both sides for widening the chasm that now di-

vides and threatens the world.

Nevertheless, the main source of the extremely dangerous escalation of tensions in recent months is in the White House rather than in the Kremlin. Ronald Reagan didn't invent the Cold War, but he has made it his crusade.

Although profound differences and conflicting interests separate American and Soviet society, most leaders of both countries in recent years seemed to adjust, however reluctantly, to the fact that there are two superpowers, and that we must find ways to limit confrontation if the world is to survive.

Not so President Reagan. He is fighting the Cold War to "win." The strategy is to beat the Soviets in the arms race, to mount enough military and economic pressure so that they are eventually compelled to bow before our superior strength or face collapse. The hallmark of this strategy is not to be afraid to take risks, up to and including the risk of nuclear war. A "defense guidance" document (*New York Times*, May 30, 1982) calls for preparations to "prevail" over the USSR in a nuclear war over a "protracted conflict period"—in other words, exactly the kind of war the scientists assure us would destroy life on earth. We lunge toward the launch-on-warning precipice by deploying Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe.

And this is supposed to convince the Soviets to "negotiate in earnest." Instead, of course, the Soviets continue the match game by announcing they will deploy nuclear missiles on the oceans within minutes' reach of American cities.

Third World connection.

There is a deadly connection between the uncontrolled race for nuclear and conventional arms supremacy and the escalating belligerence in Central America and the Mideast. The Cold War is the excuse for patterns reminiscent of Vietnam, although with each passing year the danger mounts that a new Vietnam could be the trigger for nuclear catastrophe.

Of course, the Reagan administration only carries to extremes established Cold War logic as it has operated in regard to the Third World. If our government uses its power to resist reform and revolution, if it organizes coups wherever an Allende or an Arbenz comes to the fore, if it backs any violent regime so long as it proclaims anti-Communism, if it allocates advanced rapid deployment forces for intervention wherever the status quo is shaky—then it leaves a clear choice to all who must seek social change by opposing their oppressors: give up or, if you want to survive, look for support that can balance the odds.

The Soviets are at times criticized in the Third World for actually limiting support to avoid superpower confrontations or because of economic priorities, and for their own interventionism when they deem their interests at stake, as in Afghanistan.

When one considers the American advantage in deployment of forces and capacity for intervention in the Third World, the aggressive behavior of the Reagan administration simply can't be explained in terms of a Soviet threat. Nor is there any recent stepping up of Soviet militancy in these regions that could be regarded as analogous to our new surge of adventurism.

The Reagan strategy is as unrealistic as it is risky. Far from inducing greater acquiescence to American interests, it stiffens resistance. It also, unfortunately, counters the influence of those in the USSR and in Third World movements who favor negotiations. It may encourage power bids by adventurists as dogmatic

as Reagan in the belief that there can never be peace with "the enemy." We saw this in the coup against Bishop in Grenada, which President Reagan quickly exploited as an excuse for invasion. We see examples of it in internecine conflicts in the Mideast, which don't provide easy pickings, but only add to Reagan's futility and to everyone's misery.

Is there some way out of this mess? Only if both sides acknowledge in time a common interest that is stronger than our antagonisms and prejudices. That interest is mutual preservation from annihilation. It is not solely a matter of postponing the day of nuclear judgment, but of realizing that both the Soviet Union and the U.S. desperately need peaceful alternatives to the Cold War and the arms race.

The common interest is strengthened not only by universal fear of ultimate nuclear disaster, but also by a reality that cannot long be ignored: namely, that no side is capable of establishing its supremacy over the other. Whatever short-range advantages the Cold War may offer to one or another power group, neither the U.S. nor the USSR can win that war. The cost and risks of the contest are monumental, but neither superpower can control developments on any continent. Each has increasing difficulty enforcing its will within the sphere it claims.

Once upon a time.

There was a time after World War II when aspirations for world supremacy for either the U.S. or the USSR might not have seemed irrational to many people in either camp. The U.S. emerged from the

war as overwhelmingly the strongest world power, with the atom bomb monopoly to boot. Henry Luce and others did indeed talk about an "American Century." The Soviet Union came out devastated, with 20 million killed. Yet, despite the devastation, the Soviet Union was in a strong moral and political position at the end of World War II. In the wake of the war, the old colonial empires were breaking up, there was the victory of the Chinese revolution and the USSR headed up a new, seemingly united socialist and anti-imperialist camp.

Since that time, both powers have had their comeuppance. For the U.S. the prime lesson was Vietnam. We have had to adjust to not being winners. We contend again with intense international competition, severe economic and domestic problems.

For the Soviets, it's true that they gained military strength, almost—not quite—parity with the U.S. But they did this at the expense of political strength and support. Compelled or determined to focus on overcoming military inferiority, they subordinated or shunned other areas of competition that would entail relaxing controls in Eastern Europe and at home. They suffered the break with China. Now they are, again in the interest of "security," learning hard lessons in the effort to pacify Afghanistan with an army of occupation.

Unlike during the '50s, no one now sees aspirations for world supremacy by either superpower as rational, except Ronald Reagan and, perhaps, any similar die-hards who may be waiting in the wings for Yuri Andropov's cold to get worse.

The hope for easing tensions, then, is not reliance on leaders who tell us not to flinch while they take chances with the future of the world. It is with people of all countries who have enough sense to be afraid and to insist on sanity.

The hope is that humanity's will for survival will prove stronger than *Star Wars* fantasies and illusions about "winning" wars, cold or hot.

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By Lawrence Kramer

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME for "progressive" economists. Many issues they've been talking about—defense spending, worker ownership and plant closings, national planning, the feminization of poverty, Third World underdevelopment—are starting to appear in mainstream political debate. And with each passing month, both far right and liberal economic prescriptions wear thinner. Does this mean that it's time at last for the left to cash in its chips?

Ann Beaudry, formerly at the Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies, thinks the time is right, that it demands an heroic effort to build a new consensus. She and others organized a recent "summit" of leaders from citizen action and public interest groups, government, academia and labor. The result? According to David Gordon of New York's Center for Democratic Alternatives, "We're close to a flagpole document, but not yet there."

The Progressive Leadership Conference on America's Economic Future was preceded by a series of regional meetings involving 60 left economists and policy analysts. Of course, a conference cannot consolidate a diverse movement. But the hope for an alternative agenda brought 225 people to Washington, D.C. in mid-January.

In their conference packet was a work in progress, intended to become a platform of popular consumption. But "Toward a New Economic Agenda for America's Future," written by economist Richard Parker, wasn't debated or adopted. Why not?

Faced with an ambitious goal, the talk was mostly about smaller issues. A pioneering conference devoted to risky explorations often drifted back to familiar shores. Among the obstacles: too much attention was paid to how badly the current system is functioning; too little attention was given to basic questions about how to reach people. Finally, politeness and a fragile optimism seemed to prevent a real airing of the unresolved questions and disagreements that are the substance of developing a set of attractive ideas, convincing programs and workable strategies.

The solace of the merciless critique.

Very often, at this conference called to develop alternatives, describing problems substituted for thinking about them. Of course, vast areas of domestic devastation and terrifying international dangers urgently demand our attention and anger. And, faced with the possibility of a second Reagan term, our immediate prospects are bleak. We feel schizophrenic—

PERSPECTIVES

Economic future of U.S. explored

despite all we know, we are unable to change much. Piling on the detail about the nature and consequences of present policies provides some satisfaction—that way, at least, it feels like we're attacking the issues.

That's not to say we don't need information. Progress on an alternative vision calls for new ways of looking at what we're up against. The second major conference paper, "The Economic State of the Union 1984: Uneven Recovery—Uncertain Future," by Massachusetts economists Barry Bluestone, Bennett Harrison and Lucy Gorham, analyzed our current uneven, inadequate and inequitable recovery. Leslie Nulty of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union showed us why American industrial workers shouldn't take the fall for our economy's problems: "The left shouldn't be defensive about high wages for U.S. workers—they're good for the economy. The glory days of the '50s and '60s were built on rising real wages for the U.S. working class." But such work, while valuable, doesn't negate the need to develop alternatives.

Asking the right questions.

In no other capitalist nation are the judgments and predictions of the left so peripheral. We may often joke that liberals rely on the left for their ideas, but these days you wouldn't know it. Perhaps, as University of California Regent Stanley Sheinbaum pointed out, that's because "the liberals have lost their spine." We've elected some progressives, and we've established outposts in neighborhoods, unions and schools—but we lack influential powerbrokers and, for the most part, highly visible spokespeople. Most Americans rarely hear our views, except when we're able to find a sympathetic reporter.

Given the uneven matchup in power and resources, our problem is not a failure to do our homework on theories and facts. Our difficulty is more basic: getting more people to understand and accept our ideas. At the Washington meeting, the question "How can we reach people?" was addressed with useful tips about PR, organizing or electoral cam-

paigns—or with advice about being pragmatic.

Yet the difficulty isn't technical. The trouble is connecting a left analysis to our fellow citizens' everyday thinking and anti-ideological tendencies. As Gar Alperovitz of the National Center for Economic Alternatives noted, "We've made extraordinary growth in the last 10 years in our ability to flesh out a program and organize around it. But it won't go anywhere unless...it engenders and is rooted in community values of renewal and fairness."

Pride and policy.

At the conference, Derek Shearer described how efforts in California have resulted in "progress in demystifying money and the investment process, and increased the number of players," and Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower saw in local Sunbelt victories underground signs that "we're doing more than you think, and moving more than you think."

But when does justifiable satisfaction become arrogance? The aggressive impulse is generally healthy—after all, we do want to win! And the call of Hulbert James of HumanSERVE "to fight for what we believe" was inspiring. But pride can become belligerent impatience—perhaps a hangover from some organizers' conflicts with left sectarians in the early '70s.

Of course, it's frustrating to fight so hard for pale and unexciting imitations of full-fledged socialism. It's tempting instead to charge forward. Yet the Washington meeting did not discuss how to do that in a way that makes sense to those we seek to organize. When people on the left insist that we "call things by their right names," are we paying more attention to our own need to be sure we're radicals than to our desire for effective political programs? Is it arrogant or realistic to say the left can try to set the terms for debate—for instance, on these issues:

- Mainstream economists keep raising the ceiling for "true" full employment. These days, those who most fear inflation, and those who think many women or minorities don't need jobs as much as white men, peg it at unemployment levels of 6 percent or higher. Recently, Harvard economist Otto Eckstein broke that consensus, saying we could have 4 percent unemployment. If we believe even that is too high, should progressives be calling for 2 percent or less—along with price controls?

- What about fighting for more than "just jobs": for improved quality of work and a shorter work week?

- Then there's the evolving debate on industrial policy, under attack from the right as disguised socialist central planning. How can we help shape the emerging program while maintaining our critique about how the powerful and the powerless will be represented in the decisions made under industrial policy?

What is to be decided?

Under a veneer of confidence and expertise, a high level of uncertainty about the future—about what strategy makes sense—was apparent. Though we may be close to agreement on a general economic program, many critical questions raised by economists at the conference remain unresolved:

- What do we say about subjects on which we don't have fully developed positions? David Gordon's list of areas where we're still trying to come up with

answers included the deficit, price controls, tax reform and control of banking. Jeff Faux of the Project on Industrial Policy & Democracy would add how to implement democratic planning to that list: "The truth is, we don't know how to do it."

- What about industrial policy? The *New Republic's* Bob Kuttner pointed out that it could lead to increased unemployment, if not done democratically and if it doesn't affect the distribution of productivity. Michigan economist Ernest Wilson warned that this technocratic policy can become a tool that defines the issue. James Galbraith of the Congressional Joint Economic Committee doubted a government agency could force major corporations to do what they weren't going to do anyway, and was skeptical about controlling credit and picking winners. Randy Barber of the Center for Economic Organizing pointed to the difficulty of campaigning for an abstract issue that must be demonstrated to be understood. Others found the issue itself "boring and unsexy."

- What to do about the looming elections? David Gordon said a big effort for 1984 would be fooling ourselves and wasting time, and urged shooting for an impact on 1986 congressional races. But Robert Borosage of the Institute for Policy Studies insisted we have to band together and stop reaction—defeat Reagan, work for any Democratic nominee—or spend the rest of our political lives trying to undo the damage. Many strategists hope the Jesse Jackson campaign becomes a lightning rod for left issues. And they recognized that electoral success by a disarmament movement, seeking to free what Gordon Adams of the Defense Budget Project of Washington's Center on Budget and Policy Priorities called "an economy held hostage to the military budget," might lay the groundwork for the success of an alternative economic program.

Even if we reach consensus on all these issues, still others can't be neatly resolved. Michael Harrington of the Democratic Socialists of America pointed out that the left, to be effective, needs to learn to live with ambiguity, disagreement and unresolved issues. According to Harrington, we can disagree with the AFL-CIO on Latin America and work with them on taxes and education; we can agree with the Catholic Church on nuclear disarmament and economics while disagreeing on abortion: "We have to find a way to march with them on Monday and fight on Tuesday so we can march together again on Wednesday."

The themes and ideas raised at this conference deserve wide distribution. Perhaps by the next one, we'll have some evidence of what works. And we'll keep in mind the definition of our job provided by Judy Gregory from Cleveland 925: "Ninety-eight percent of Americans can't hear our discussion; they believe the shibboleths that Americans have asked too much and live too well. The key to politically effective social change is to talk to people so they can hear us."

The following conference materials are available to In These Times readers:

- "The Economic State of the Union" and "Toward a New Economic Agenda" from the Economic Education Project, Public Media Center, 25 Scotland St., San Francisco, CA 94133.

- "Our Jobs, Our Future: Questions for the Candidates about America's Industry and Economy" from the Project on Industrial Policy & Democracy, 2000 P St., NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036. \$5.00.

- "The Wage Investment and the Union Role in the Management Agreement at Eastern Airlines" from the Center for Economic Organizing, 1346 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1010, Washington, DC 20036.

- "The Recovery and Full Employment Planning Act" from Rep. John Conyers, Rayburn Building, Room 2313, Washington, DC 20515.

Lawrence Kramer, former executive director of the Energy Task Force, is a writer and consultant to nonprofit groups in New York.

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INPRINT

FICTION

The Devil's Stocking
By Nelson Algren
Arbor House, 308 pp., \$8.95

Chicago: City on the Make
By Nelson Algren
McGraw Hill, 106 pp., \$5.95

By Bettina Drew

Though mostly forgotten now by academics and others in the literary establishment whose taste is for a less brutal, less hard-hitting prose, Nelson Algren was a novelist who depicted the dark underside of the American dream. Best known for his novels *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1949) and *A Walk on the Wild Side* (1956), Algren created characters from the depths of city life: small-time boxers, burglars, pimps and whores.

He once said that he wrote out of "a kind of irritability that the people on top should be so contented, so absolutely unaware of these other people, and so sure that their values are the right ones. There's a certain satisfaction in recording the people underneath, whose values are as sound as theirs, and a lot funnier, and a lot truer, in a way."

Now, two years after his death, his last novel *The Devil's Stocking* has been published, and his famous prose poem *Chicago: City on the Make* has been re-issued more than 30 years after its original publication.

Unlike his previous novels, *The Devil's Stocking* is based on a true story, that of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, a nationally known boxer who was convicted in 1966 for shooting three people to death in a white bar in Paterson, N.J. A former black militant in a racially tense town, Carter has always insisted he was framed by police. He was convicted largely on testimony given by two small-time burglars who had been promised a deal by the district attorney. Nine years later the discovery of suppressed evidence concerning the reliability of these witnesses caused the Supreme Court to throw out the first conviction.

By this time the case had become a *cause celebre* championed by such luminaries as Bob Dylan, who wrote a song about the case called "Hurricane." Carter was re-convicted in a second trial, but under equally dubious circumstances: the witnesses now changed their stories again to say that they had not lied at the first trial, and defense lawyers claimed that police had planted evidence in Carter's car after he was picked up for questioning.

Along with other leftists and liberals, Algren considered Carter's conviction a serious miscarriage of justice. He became obsessed with the case after writing a magazine article about it. He moved to Paterson to be near the locale where the novel would take place, a strategy of on-the-spot recording he had used successfully in previous novels.

But while *The Devil's Stocking* follows the basic story of Carter pretty faithfully, it is nonetheless fiction. Algren changed the names, added and took out characters and did not mention evidence like the bullets found in Carter's car after the shooting.

The novel is vintage Algren, written with his ear for succinct dialog and in the same direct prose in short paragraphs that seems much simpler than it is. The story begins with Ruby Calhoun (Carter) going into the ring and then it flashes back to his childhood, his angry father, his early career as a mugger and shoplifter before he got into boxing. It is fully one quarter through the novel before Algren recounts the killings, and by this time the characters have been firmly established.

Much of the beauty in the book lies in its powerful portrayal of supporting characters. Red, the real murderer, is shadowy and unpredictable. A mulatto who can "pass," he is unsure of his identity. His girlfriend, Dovie



Record-keeper of urban life

Jean Dawkins, is from a large black family where she never got much individual attention, and she doesn't seem to mind becoming a whore and stripper when they leave New Jersey because she can then be the sole recipient of his love. Iello, the petty thief who fingers Calhoun, is helpless and pathetic. Manipulated by police and ultimately by Calhoun's scorned mistress, he does what he's told to pull the least time in prison. These people are not fighters like Ruby Calhoun, and they seem to fall into violence almost unintentionally, as if they are not in control of what happens to them.

Through detailed descriptions of their lives and work, Algren reveals the day-to-day reality of the underworld. The whorehouse where Dovie Jean works is explored through his relentless eyes: the heavily draped rooms and the scantily clad women, the boredom, the apathetic faces of the hookers when a john is choosing among them, the big dumb bouncers. Ruby Calhoun, like the hero of Algren's first successful novel *Never Come Morning*, is a "fighting man." Boxing is used by Algren as a metaphor for class struggle—a way for

poor, spirited, politically powerless people to make a living.

The entire novel is about struggle—not only for justice but for life and hope and freedom from violence and jail. *The Devil's Stocking* is about how vengeance, survival, love and convenience add up to what the American legal system calls "justice." In Algren's fictional world, it is jealousy that undermines the testimony of the second trial. But it wouldn't have really mattered by whom or under what circumstances justice was abandoned. Any human frailty or emotion could have caused it. It is a world where justice is lost to personal gain.

His kind of town.

Chicago: City on the Make is not a novel at all but a prose poem that presents the history of Chicago from its frontier days to the '50s. When first published in 1951, it was unfavorably received in its home town. One reviewer wrote that "a more partial, distorted, unenviable slant was never taken by a man pretending to cover the Chicago scene." The essay's premise is that the heart of the city beats in its slums. It's written in a slangy, word-packed



Nelson Algren (left) wrote a prose poem about the history of Chicago (above, in 1890).

prose, with a slightly rambling and somewhat unstructured form that allows Algren's acerbic and wide-ranging social commentary lots of freedom.

It's a two-sided city, a city of poor folks and the squares who drive out to the suburbs "where the houses are pictures from *Town and Country*. And the people are stuffed with kapok." The essay is permeated with a nostalgia for the vigor of Chicago's cultural past that was being eclipsed by the coming of the McCarthy era and the complacency of the '50s.

It was the popularity of Jean Paul Sartre's translation in Europe that prompted rediscovery in the U.S. years later. Included in the present McGraw-Hill re-issue is an afterword written by Algren in 1961. He lashes out at the censorship and self-hatred Chicago imposed upon itself by refusing to accept his less-than-genteel portrait of the city as a legitimate and respectable part of its culture.

But in addition to launching an angry response to critics, Algren discusses literature in general and his place in it. He asserts that literature is made whenever "a challenge is put to the legal apparatus by conscience in touch with humanity," and he places himself firmly within the anti-legalistic tradition of Chicago writers such as Theodore Dreiser, Richard Wright and James T. Farrell.

Of American society and its literature, he writes that consumer-

ism had become so pervasive that "the economically empowered became the emotionally hollowed. This would account for the fact that every enduring portrait in American fiction is that of a man or woman outside the upper-middle class. From Ahab to Ethan Frome and Willy Loman, Hawthorne's branded woman to Blanche du Bois, all are people who, living without alternatives, are forced to live life all the way."

Algren's view of people fighting to overcome the tyranny of the social order brought him into contact with left intellectuals like Sartre, and he had a much-publicized love affair with Simone de Beauvoir. He was reticent toward the American literary scene, but was accepted during his lifetime as a brilliant, if unusual writer. He won a National Book Award for *The Man with the Golden Arm* and was eventually elected to the National Institute and Academy of Arts and Letters.

Algren remained productive throughout his life, finishing *The Devil's Stocking* two years before his death at 72. He never made much money from his writing, nor did he expect to. He was more content to be an important record-keeper of 20th-century urban American life. What he said about *The Devil's Stocking* applies to his other works as well: "I've tried to write about a man's struggle against injustice. That's the only story worth telling." ■

Bettina Drew writes poetry and teaches in the basic writing program at the City College of New York.

Nelson Algren's fiction tells how vengeance, survival, love and convenience add up to what the American legal system calls "justice."

ART«»ENTERTAINMENT

FILM

Wajda's choice saves union

By Pat Aufderheide

In December, Associated Press reports trumpeted the dire news that the Polish military regime had once again struck a blow against freedom of expression, by banishing filmmaker Andrzej Wajda (*Man of Marble*, *Man of Iron*, *Danton*) from the country's major film union, the Polish Filmmakers Association. But according to insiders' reports passed from Polish meeting halls to European correspondents, the news may actually be a qualified victory for filmmakers. The incident tells you something about the tangled relationship between art and politics, in the West—where we eagerly snap up news of Communist censorship—as much as in the East.

You won't catch anyone ever saying in Poland, "Aw, relax, it's only a movie." It's never "only a movie" in Poland, just like it's never "only a novel" or "only a song." In a country this passionately nationalistic, and this historically beset by challenges to its autonomy, every piece of popular art is also an affirmation of cultural identity. Not to mention a political statement. Culture—indeed, the very act of recalling history—is political. For instance, Wajda's early film *Kanal* not only lionized the partisans of the Warsaw Uprising, but also implicitly criticized the Russians, who had waited until the partisans had been crushed to pitch in.

Polish cinema has recently had a remarkable place in Polish pol-

Wajda played politics. He resigned, but not to the government.

itics. In the years building up to the 1980 breakthrough of the Solidarity movement, film played a dramatic, galvanizing public function. You can see it simply from titles like *Excuse Me, Is This Where They Beat People Up?* People stood in line to see films like Feliks Falk's *Top Dog*, about a corrupt official, and Wajda's *Man of Marble*, about the search for a Stalinist-era workers' hero who died in 1970 strikes. After Poles saw the films, they thought about them, and talked, and... The next thing you knew, Wajda was making the epic of the Solidarity movement, called *Man of Iron*.

Optical opposition.

One of the reasons for Polish cinema's independence, in good and bad times, from the government has been the staunch critical

stance of a few filmmakers, most prominently (at least in international circles) Wajda and Krzysztof Zanussi (*Camouflage*, *The Constant Factor*, *Contract*). Another related reason is the existence of institutions such as the 12,000-member Polish Filmmakers Association, which sets terms of wages and working conditions in the nationally owned film industry. It also sets the production structure, where leading filmmakers head separate units, making films and training new talent. For years Wajda was a leading film executive, as head of Unit X, and also head of the Association. It was the combination of his personal integrity and the fierce independence of the film industry that gave him and student filmmakers entrance into the negotiating room in the Gdansk shipyards; and it's that kind of respect that made Lech Walesa take time off from union organizing to play a cameo role in *Man of Iron*.

Man of Iron, however, ends with some cautionary scenes. In one, the corrupt TV reporter's boss reassures him—so what if the strikers won? he asks. It's only a piece of paper signed under duress. It doesn't mean a thing. Wajda knew what he was talking about. A veteran political survivor, he knew a dangerous game had only begun at that table in Gdansk.

During the months of Solidarity, Wajda became a media figure to rival the political celebrity of Lech Walesa. And so it came as no surprise that the military leaders who came to power in December 1981 should target him—and the film industry. *Man of Iron*, like many other movies made under the influence of burgeoning democracy, was banned. In April 1983, after repeated demands that Wajda resign and the union be purged of dissidents had failed, the Association was dissolved. Then a month later Wajda was fired from his position as head of Unit X. Finally, the unit itself was dissolved.

Baby steps to democracy.

Today there still is no Unit X. But there is, once again, a Polish Filmmakers Association. But with one big difference: no Andrzej Wajda. From the outside, it looks like a simple case of Big Brother strong-arming. But from the inside it looks much more like a delicate job of restoration—even a baby-step forward in democratic artistic control.

Wajda himself, it seems, was not eager to hold on to the post of the union's president. He had to take a non-cooperator's stance—not only for personal reasons but because he had been a charismatic emblem of Solidarity in the arts. But like many veterans of the culture wars, he knew the value of an existing institution. Without a union, not only would artists be powerless to set their



Wajda faced a familiar Polish artistic dilemma: compromise or self-destruction. Above, his early film *KANAL*; below, *MAN OF MARBLE*.



own contract terms, but they would quickly be pitted against each other once the government set up its own Party-line filmmakers' union.

So Wajda played politics. He said he would resign, but not to a government he didn't recognize. He would only resign to the body that had elected him.

And the government agreed. Wajda presented his resignation to a legally convened meeting of the executive board, which promptly decided it could only replace him at a democratic convention of the union. Indeed, in late December the union held not only a convention but ran open elections for its new board and executive board.

There was only one hitch: none of the old guard really wanted to take Wajda's place in the hot-seat. Finally non-Party member Janusz Majewski, a comedy filmmaker who works in Zanussi's film unit, was talked into accepting the nomination and won the election. It was a direct challenge to the government, which backed a Communist Party member for the job. In fact, all the Communist Party candidates did poorly in the elections, which installed a board that is 85 percent non-Party members. And the seven-member executive board has only one Party member. The election dispatched the government's demand that the union be purged of dissidents by sidestepping it. And since then the government has made a conciliatory gesture, lifting the ban on most films made

under the Solidarity influence—even promising to lift, someday, the ban on *Man of Iron*.

That is why the bad news about losing Wajda's leadership doesn't hit Polish filmmakers as hard as it does Western headlines.

"Of course this was a compromise, but it was an honorable one," said one filmmaker who asked not to be named. "The Association won't be the tough organization it once was, but it also is not the toy of the government."

"The real victory was in not dissolving the organization. The worst part of that would have

been that the artistic community would be destroyed. It would have taken years to create a democratic base within a new organization."

The choice between compromise and self-destruction is a familiar one to Polish artists. It is particularly acute in filmmaking, which is an industrial art involving elaborate teamwork and big-bucks funding. As Krzysztof Zanussi put it on the eve of martial law, "A writer can always write 'for the bottom drawer' or circulate his uncensored work unofficially. But films can't be made that way."

CALENDAR

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PHILADELPHIA, PA

March 24

Nonpartisan/multipartisan "Meet Your Candidates" wine-and-cheese reception. Temple University Center City (23rd floor), 1616 Walnut St. 2:00-5:00 p.m. Hosted by Concerned Citizens of the Delaware Valley (CC-DV) in cooperation with other citizens' groups. Information and complimentary tickets: Harry Hyde Jr., Box 47, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

April 8

Benefit concert for Raoul Gustav Walenberg, Lutheran Swedish diplomat who saved 100,000 persons from the Nazis and is imprisoned in Russia. Two artists of Philadelphia Orchestra. Gloria Dei (Old Swedes) Church, Delaware Ave. and Christian St.; 2:30 p.m.; followed by champagne reception. Admission \$20, \$35 couple. The Walenberg Committee of Greater Philadelphia, Inc.; c/o Philadelphia Art Alliance, 251 S. 18th St., Philadelphia, PA 19103. (215) 472-0989.

CHICAGO, IL

February 11

Film *America from Hitler to MX*, showing one day only. Award-winning documentary, called "the most powerful anti-nuclear documentary yet produced" (*Time Out*, London). The Film Center, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Columbus Drive at Jackson Blvd. Shows: 6:00 & 8:00 p.m. Tickets: \$3.00. Phone: 443-3733. Distributed for sales and rentals by Parallel Films, 314 W. 91st St., New York,

Orleans

Continued from page 16

every weekend our transparent charades and escapades define the psychology of the oppressed. The diary of our social relationships detail, with alarming clarity, a future "live for today/ damn tomorrow" attitude that is characteristic of a people who have no hope of controlling their future.

Movin' up the river.

It is no surprise that many of us feel forced to leave, head north, head west, get out to find a career choice, to find a place where our potentials can be developed, or just to find a city where niggers ain't always at each other's throat, cutting chump change funky deals.

I don't know if those who leave are the lucky ones, but I do know that most who stay suffer even though our pain is often anesthetized by a hot and humid climate that for five or six months out of the year is unmerciful. We are besotted by liquor laws that amount to no laws and thus encourage public and private drunkenness, by too much salt and sugar in our overly rich and spicy culinary preferences and by a strong and invigorating but unconscious and apolitical culture.

Looking on our street corners contradicts the popular adage that our children are our future. The reality is bleak: too many young males attending the school of the street are unemployed, except for the seeming perpetual occupation of holding up telephone poles, drinking cheap wine, indulging in cheap drugs and commiserating about their conditions. Too many young females become pregnant and are left alone to bear the next generation of street children, finding themselves dependent on a callous state system of welfare for economic support.

I love New Orleans.

I love New Orleans. If I'm going to live anywhere in the U.S. as a matter of choice, then I choose New Orleans.

I have learned, after a number of years of fighting the feeling, to like living in New Orleans and seemingly thrive on working here. But I know it is only because I don't stay here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Living in below-sea-level New Orleans is a lot like scuba diving: periodically and without fail, you've got to come up for air, or else you will drown—turn belly up in the sun, grow fat and lazy and drift with the tide, destined to slowly rot in these Louisiana marshlands.

You see, the plantation is a republic now. We are still depressingly underdeveloped. (Underdevelop, verb, active = to make a people or place destitute for the purpose of making the controller

rich.) Still just a source of raw materials and good times. People come here all the time to "yuk it up." The rich and white folk will always be willing to see the poor and black sing and dance. The tourists love to eat "soul food" in New Orleans, even—or especially—when it's euro-ethnically identified as "Italian" food, such as does one famous uptown eatery nearly all of whose entire kitchen is black. Understandably, and often without malice, travelers come to this haven of good times to appreciatively listen to sweet music in Big Easy. Actually, in the long run, it all amounts to having sheltered egos massaged by desperate ex-slaves who are paid to tell their master's descendants anything the visitor wants to hear.

New Orleans has, and exploits, a unique culture—a way of life unknown in other parts of the U.S.

And just like any other corner of the Third World, the best of our culture is out of our control. The most valuable artifacts are too often housed in private collections or in state institutions.

Almost all of the entrepreneurial promoters of our music are not of our race, ditto the major experts, authorities and critics.

Look at the Contemporary Arts Center. In a city that is "officially" 55 percent black, the overwhelming majority of the staff is non-black and non-Latin; the vast majority of the exhibitions eschew any allegiance to a black aesthetic.

When you control a people's art, you

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control their imagination, and when you control their imagination, the control of everything else about them is assured.

In New Orleans we have both the best and the worst of the so-called New World co-existing—a cathedral squatting next to storefront whorehouses that spread out on streets called "rue" this and "rue" that. Here we have Africanisms, such as processions under umbrellas, existing intact—a lived culture that sparkles in speech and dances in the streets.

Yet, somehow, it can be so depressing; somehow, a big fat joke, New Orleans.

But then again, I don't believe that ugly can last forever. Like Bob Marley said, "We are survivors, the black survivors." Don't believe in despair. Don't believe it's too hard to be made soft again.

Despair is the disease of the idle rich watching their kingdoms crumbling. Despair is the response of the bourgeoisie unable to prevent you and me from coming into our own. Despair is the last supper of the ruling class.

These are just some notes to remind myself to keep on pushing, a little dime I'm dropping on myself and anyone who has ears to hear: good depends on what we do.

A toast: to everyone who has ever loved, who has ever tried to turn Big Easy 'round—it will be done!

Kalamu ya Salaam, former editor of the Black Collegian, now works for the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

CLASSIFIED

PUBLICATIONS

WORLD NEWS, COMMENTARY BY SHORTWAVE RADIO. Direct from London, Moscow, Tokyo. Sidestep managed news, media bias. How to listen, program schedules, best times and frequencies. Quarterly, 4 issues \$10. The Shortwave Newsletter, P.O. Box 526, Dept. T, Clinton, WA 98236.

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By KALAMU YA SALAAM

NEW ORLEANS

Mr. Alfatih Hamad, the Sudanese ambassador to the Paris UNESCO office was amazed by what he saw. He stared out the window of a white Dodge van with a taste of *deja vu* as we negotiated backstreet in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. We bounced between inescapable potholes and slid past block after block of 10-, 15- and 20-year-old wood frame houses, many of them in desperate need of paint and repair.

Mr. Hamad turned to me, surprised that what he saw seemed so familiar. "This looks just like an African township. This looks just like the Third World."

I replied quickly without having to re-examine the streets, houses and people of this section of the city within which I was reared and where I live today.

"Yes, that's because this IS the Third World."

This is Big Easy, the place to which our black ancestors were sold "down the river." This is New Orleans.

Mr. Hamad, like thousands and thousands of other tourists, enjoyed his brief visit and went back home with *fond memories* of sensual nights and charming days casually spent in this semi-tropic, slow paced city once known as the "Paris of the New World." Tourists don't have to live here. And not living here, it is hard for them to understand what the New Orleans experience is like without the deceptive distortion of nightlights, what it is like behind the perfected polyethylene smiles of southern charm.

Poor working-class black people in New Orleans perform essentially the same functional jobs as did our grandparents: we are the servants of the rich and the white.

The fact that many of us are now civil servants and that a black man has ascended to leadership of this city unfortunately does not alter the essential truth that the jobs most of us work are jobs specifically designed to make life sweeter for rich white folks and for their compradors—i.e., people of color who have managed to gain entrance to anterooms of power via unhesitant acts of assimilation.

We, whose cheap labor makes paradise possible for the tourists, don't produce anything of significance in any appreciable quantities. We don't manufacture. We don't control capital. We don't swing sweet deals on the veranda or at the glassstopped patio table, a frosty cold pina colada waiting a few inches away. We literally deliver goods and services. We wait tables, push papers, babysit and/or teach school, cook, clean houses and highrises, clerk in stores, cut grass in the parkway commission, pull down pay checks off government payrolls, hack taxis through the French Quarter or, if we're lucky, get a "good payin' job" toiling on the riverfront. Or else we hustle in the underground economy, selling our pride, our flesh, our future, our neighbor's furniture.

Our brothers and sisters in Haiti, Jamaica, Senegal, Kenya and so on come down off the farms just like we left the cotton sack country, and they do essentially the same tasks we do.

Every weekday morning we get up to truck it on out to fight the yoke, to punch the clock and make our lil' \$4.50 or \$5.00 an hour (if we're blessed with such a high-paying job).

Every weekend night when we shout, sing, curse, cut, shoot, love, lust, gamble, beg and plead, game and get gamed on; when we dress razor sharp and drug our selves into a dull stupor; when we create beautifully alive music that gives brief brightness to the lackluster gloom of our mundane lives; when we gorge ourselves on a rich cuisine or sit for hours with beer and seafood in neighborhood taverns;

Continued on page 15

A black New Orleans native says racism makes this city work.

"This IS the Third World"